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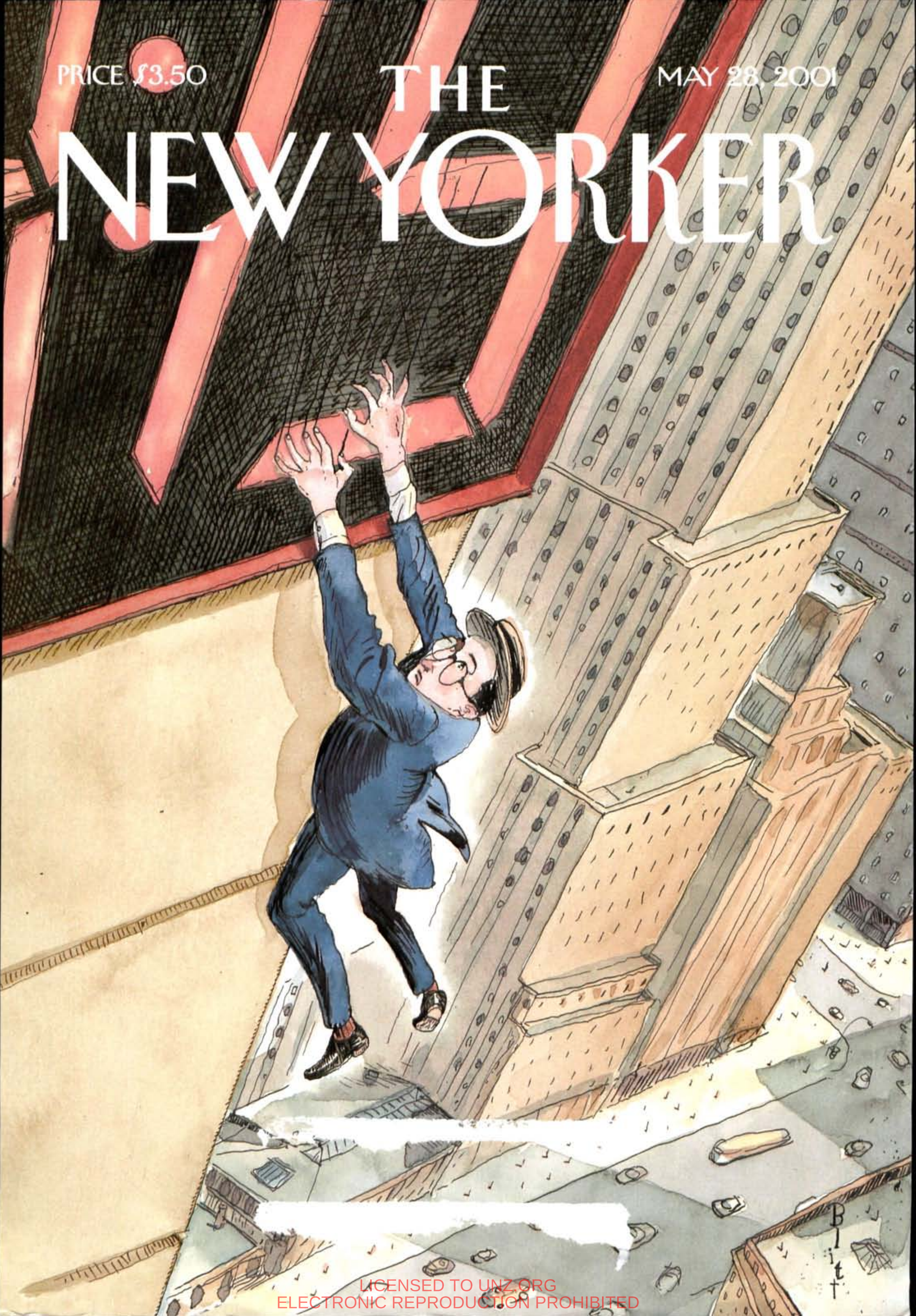

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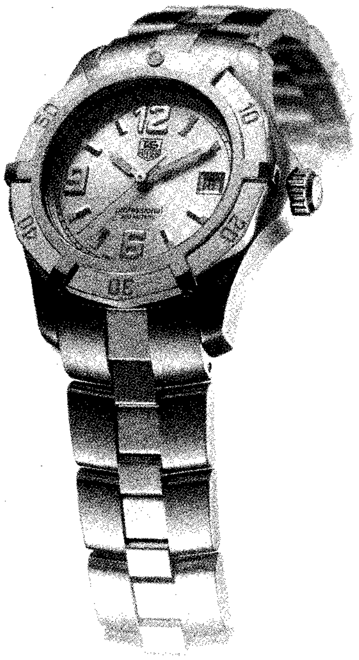

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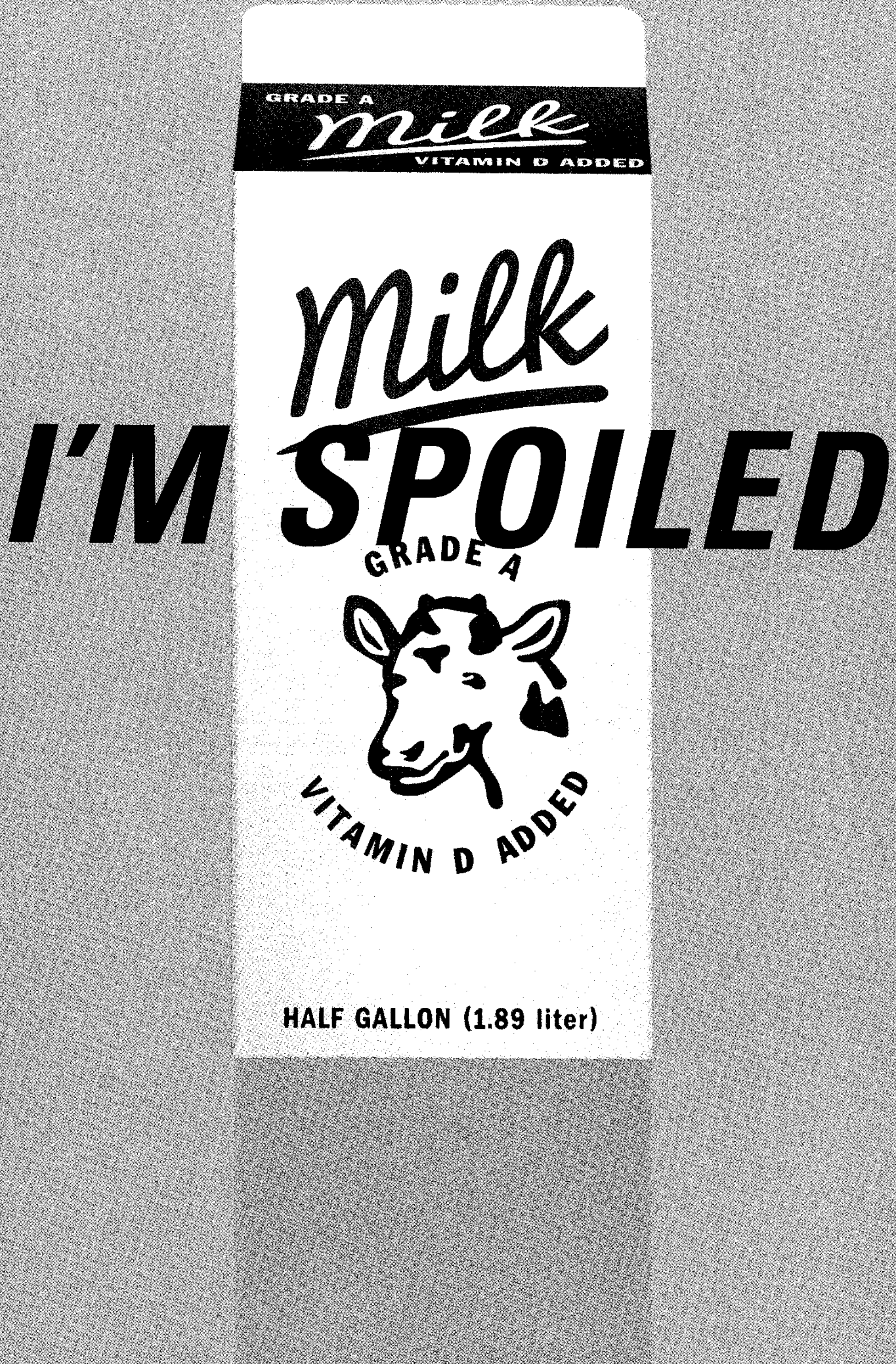
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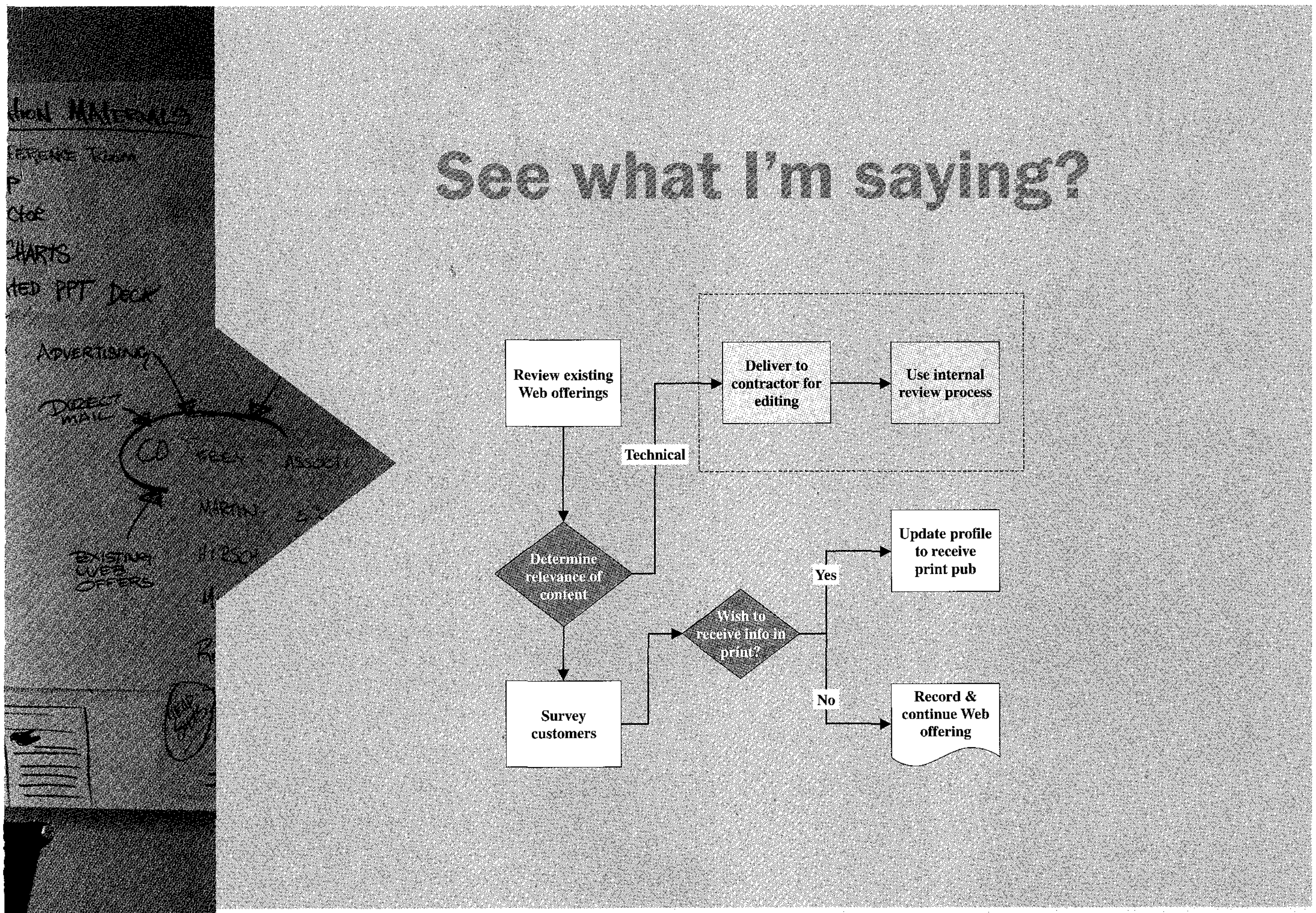
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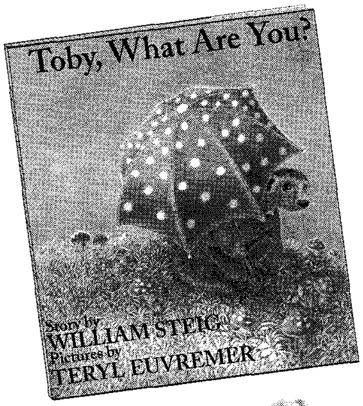

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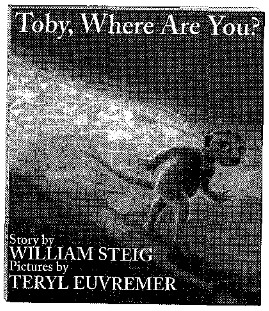

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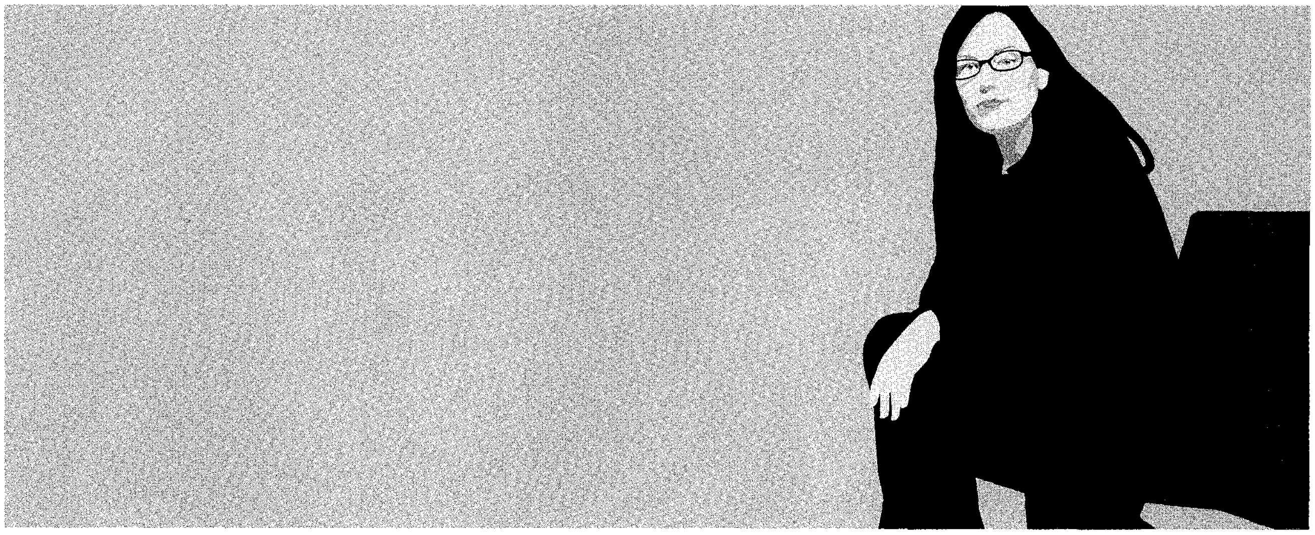

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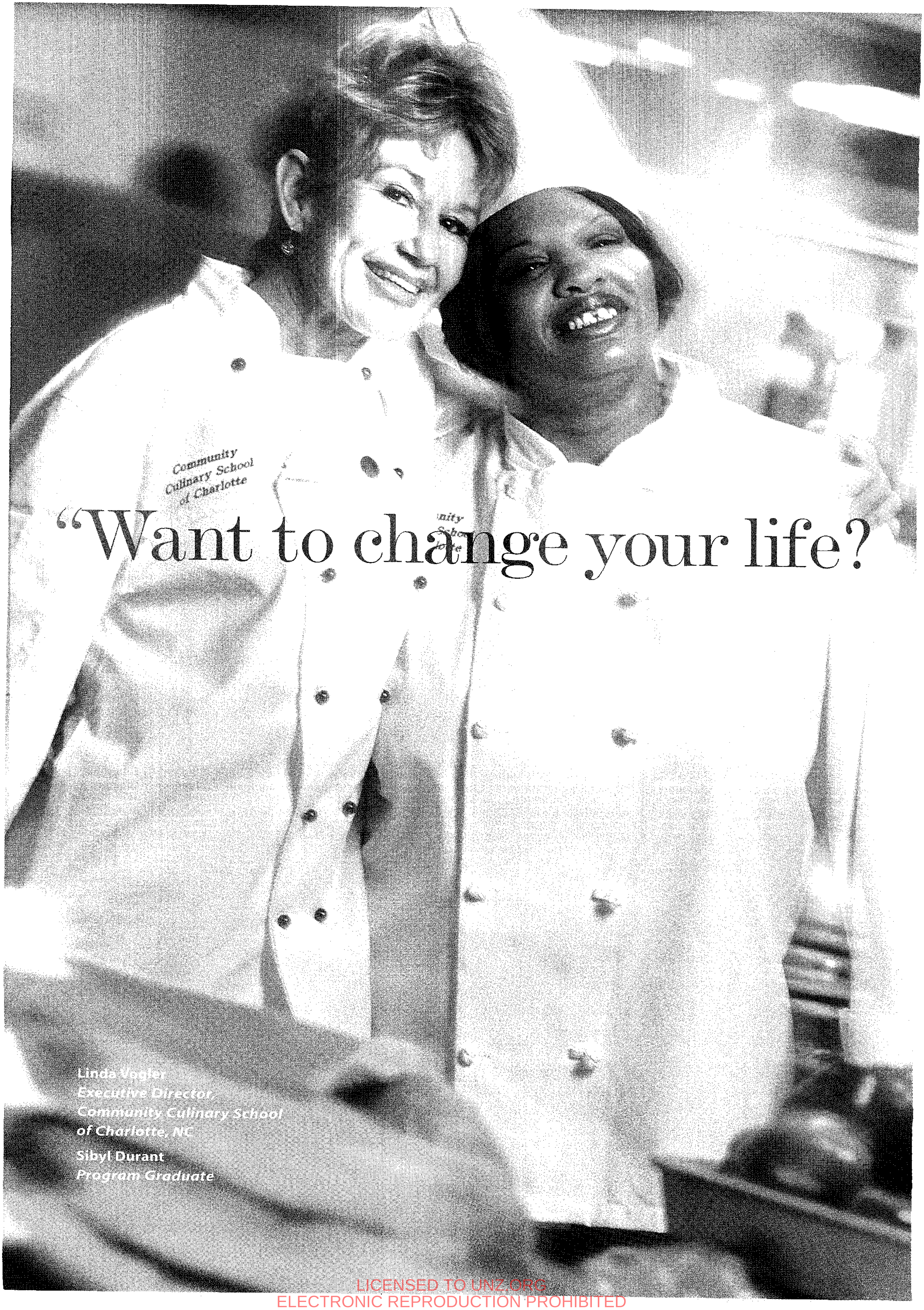
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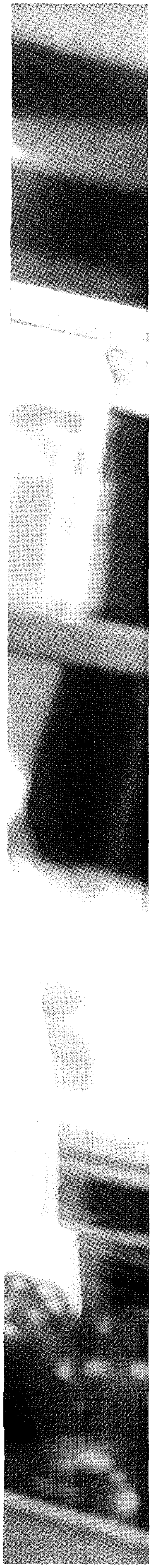

In this kitchen, chefs Linda Vogler and Sibyl Durant make a difference in the fight against hunger. When she was a struggling mother with few employable skills, Sibyl wondered how she would find a steady job. Then she discovered the Community Culinary School of Charlotte, North Carolina. There, jobless and homeless adults train for food service careers by preparing nutritious meals for the hungry. As a working chef, Sibyl now enjoys the pride of helping others and the dignity of helping herself.

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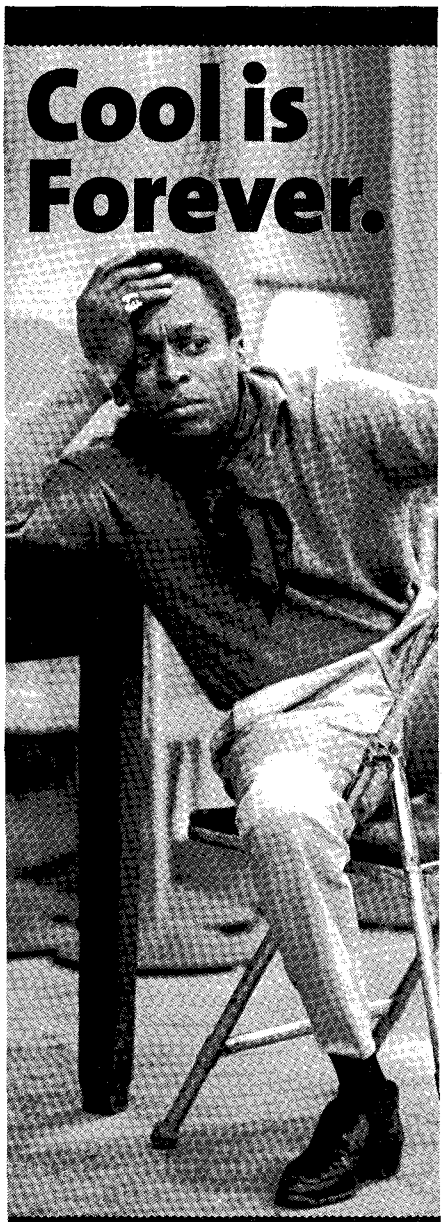
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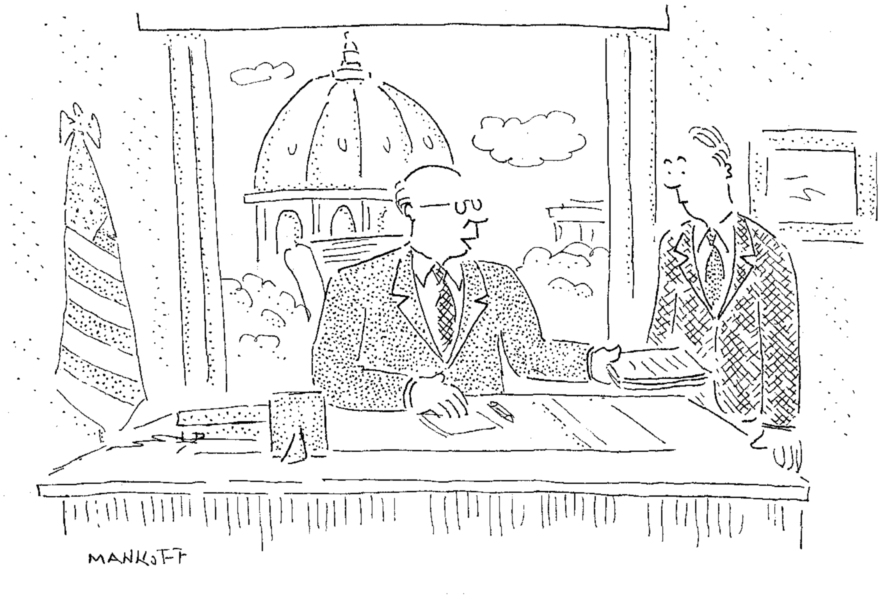

"Smart stuff, Chip, but wise up and dumb it down."

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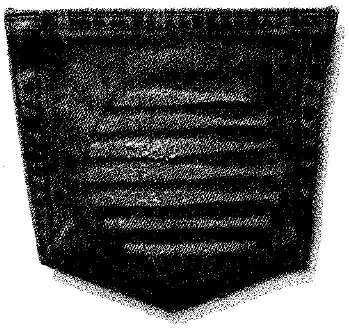

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BRINGING THE WAR HOME

The sadness evident in Hendrik Hertzberg's Comment on revelations that former Senator Bob Kerrey, as a young lieutenant in Vietnam, led soldiers in an action that resulted in the deaths of at least thirteen civilians recalled for me the words of Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.: "We have shared the incommunicable experience of war" (The Talk of the Town, May 7th). Holmes, who was wounded three times during his Civil War service, well understood the difficulty of conveying the battlefield experience (where the decision to fire or not to fire could mean life or death) to civilians. The difference between decisions made in the field and those made in everyday life should never be forgotten in discussions of Kerrey and his command.
Joseph Rosen
Lincoln, Mass.

Why is Kerrey's painful past in Vietnam a story at all? What possible purpose can be served by pillorying any individual for what may or may not have happened that night in the Mekong Delta? Will it bring back the dead? Will it serve, at this late date, any useful purpose? Just one, apparently: to boost ratings and circulation numbers. Was that worth the *Times'* and CBS's decision to open a belated attack on a tormented man who has tried for years to forget what he did—what he was, in fact, required to do by amoral politicians and ambitious but weak officers? One could find hundreds of similar stories about less visible or celebrated people. But that doesn't interest the reporters who brought this one forward. They, and not Kerrey, should be ashamed.
David Steiner, Lieutenant Colonel, United States Air Force (Ret.)
Allenspark, Colo.

Hertzberg is right to call the decision, made far above Kerrey, to wage a war in Vietnam which could be won only "by systematically denuding the land of people" a choice that corrupted our democracy as well as our soldiers. In 1966 and 1967, I was an officer in an Army psychological-operations unit near Da Nang. We would fly over designated villages and drop leaflets instructing the population to leave, because in forty-five minutes there would be an air strike to destroy this "suspected stronghold" of the Vietcong. Of course, any Vietcong were probably out of there in five minutes with their weapons and a bag of rice. That left the women, the children, the sick, and the old folks, whose families had lived there for generations, to burn in the rain of napalm and missiles that followed. It was some time before I understood the effects of what I was doing well enough to think of refusing to continue. Bob Kerrey and thousands of other veterans were duped. There were no "good guys"—only confused and misled guys. Let the armchair logicians and moralists cast their self-righteous judgments on the politicians who kept the war going, and on their corporate sponsors, and leave Bob Kerrey and the rest of us murderers to the healing of our souls.
Printer Bowler
Missoula, Mont.

Nicholas Lemann's article on Dick Cheney records both the Vice-President's smug disdain for antiwar protesters and his use of student deferrals to avoid the draft ("The Quiet Man," May 7th). The great question for students of Cheney's generation who had an out not available to young men without the money needed to stay in school, or the background, was how to respond to the war—whether to support it from their position of privilege, or to speak out against it, with honest anger. Cheney's choice, and his inability, even now, to appreciate either the motives of his opponents or the costs of his convictions, is cause for dismay.
Suzanne Ruta
New York City

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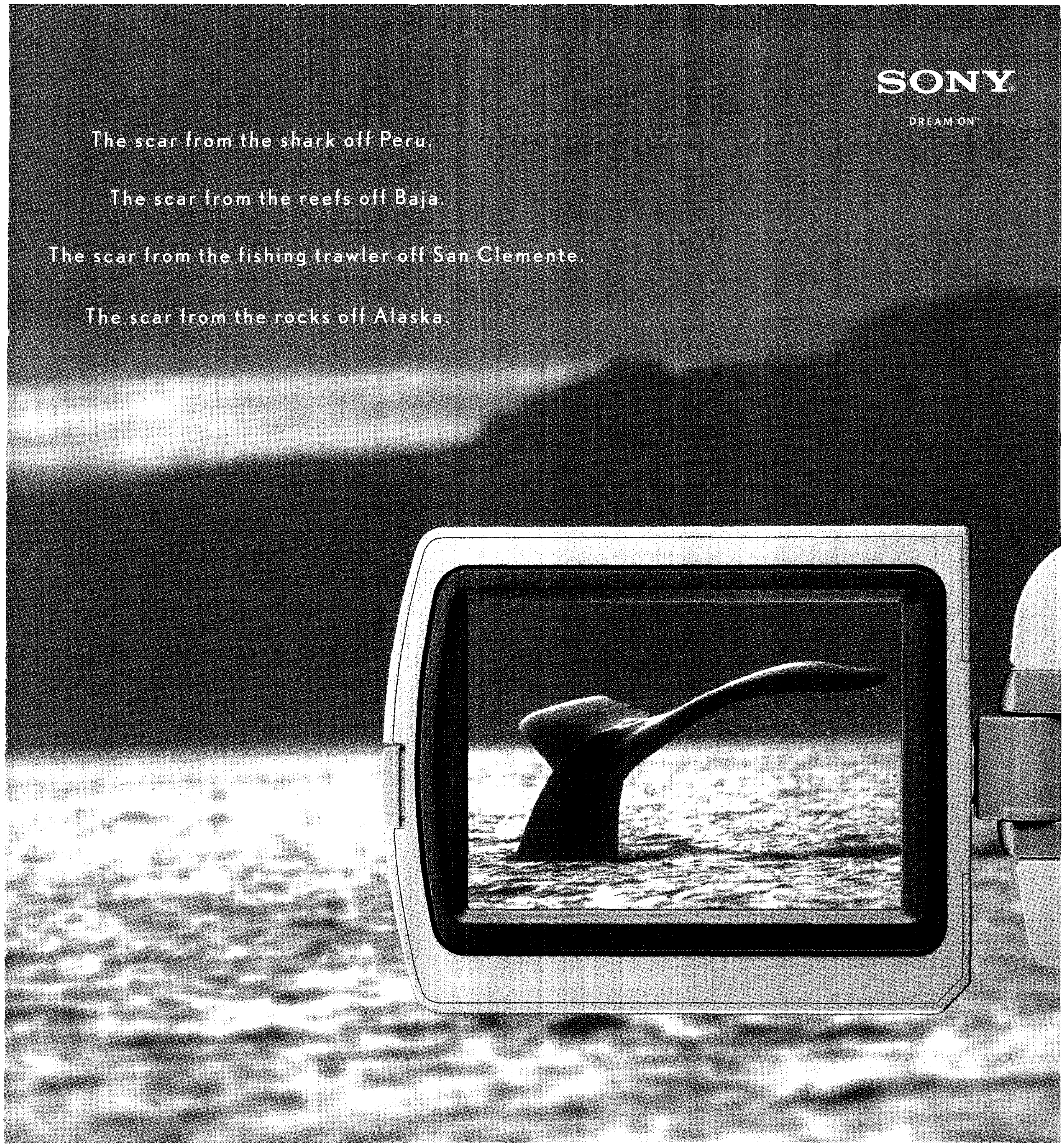
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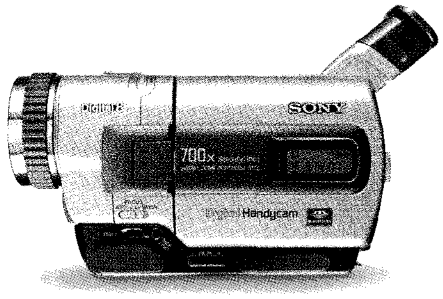
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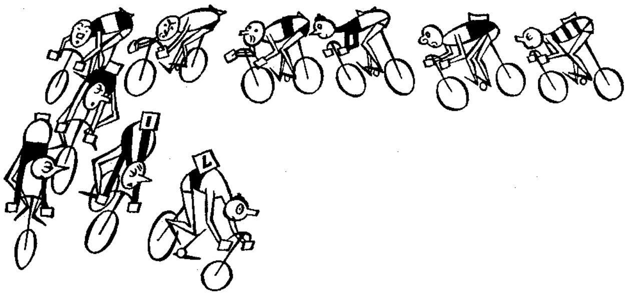

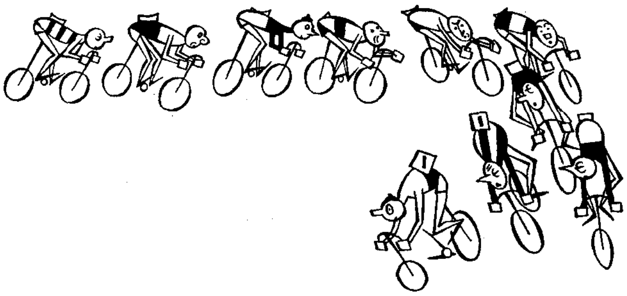

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CHAUCER IN ROME
The latest play by John Guare, set in Italy during the final year of the last millennium. Nicholas Martin is the director. In previews. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

THE CREDEAUX CANVAS
Michael Mayer directs a play by Keith Bunin, about three ambitious East Villagers with a scheme. In previews. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

THE DOG PROBLEM
David Rabe's new play, about a man, his dog, and the Mafia. Scott Ellis is the director. In previews. (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 239-6200.)

GLIMMER, GLIMMER & SHINE
From Warren Leight ("Side Man"), a new drama about jazz musicians—twin brothers who were big-band trumpeters together in the fifties. In previews. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

I LOVE AMERICA
For her one-woman show about Dominicans seeking refuge in the United States, Lidia Ramirez conducted dozens of interviews with members of the Coast Guard and with civilians in New York, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic. In previews. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 840-3074.)

ORESTES
William Burroughs, John Wayne Gacy, Bret Easton Ellis, and tabloid journalism figure into this adaptation, by Charles L. Mee, Jr., of the Euripides drama. Previews May 24-26. Opens May 27 at 7. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202.)

TICK, TICK . . . BOOM!
An autobiographical musical by the late Jonathan Larson ("Rent"). Previews begin May 23. (Jane Street Theatre, 113 Jane St. 239-6200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

AJAX
The Bat Theatre Company presents Alice Tuan's play about a sexual foursome. (Flea Theatre, 41 White St., between Broadway and Church St. 226-2407. Closes May 26.)

BAT BOY: THE MUSICAL
A kind of "My Fair Bat Boy," in which a half-bat, half-man—memorably played by Deven May—emerges from his childhood cave into adult bourgeois life. But the musical world he enters is one of darkness, not light, of ironies, not idealism, where plot is a history of abdications and song extolls the emptiness of all the standard credos—Christianity, family, community, love, redemption—and of the musical itself. It's a jejune vision, but a smart, playful, and funny one nonetheless. (Reviewed in our issue of 4/9/01.) (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-4100.)

BELLS ARE RINGING
Faith Prince and Marc Kudisch lead the cast in a revival of the 1956 Betty Comden–Adolph Green–Jule Styne musical. Tina Landau is the director. (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

BLUR
A new comedy by Melanie Marnich, in which a teen-ager discovers she's going blind. Polly Draper and Angela Goethals are in the cast. Lynne Meadow is the director. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

THE BOOK OF LIZ
In the latest comedy by the brother-and-sister team of Amy and David Sedaris, Ms. Sedaris portrays the sweating, mousy Elizabeth, a demure Puritan believer from the religious Squeamish Community who goes on a picaresque adventure after being refused the honor of organizing the Chastity Parade. As comic drama, the play is sort of an amateur fizzle, but it does offer the Sedarises the opportunity to tell some very good jokes in silly costumes and to bask in the smug downtown certainty of a soiled world. (4/9/01) (Greenwich House, 27 Barrow St. 239-6200. Closes June 1.)

A CLASS ACT
Ed Kleban's life following his success as the lyricist of "A Chorus Line" is the basis of this musical. With songs by Mr. Kleban and a book by Linda Kline and Lonny Price. Mr. Price is the director. (Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

ELI'S COMIN'
The late Laura Nyro's witty, passionate songs first came to public attention in 1968. This cycle of twenty of them, put together by Bruce Buschel and Diane Paulus, manages, without a spoken word, to tell the tale of a woman's life in the city—a tale of fun, temptation, loss, and redemption—without a false note (in any sense). The terrific Judy Kuhn leads the cast. (Vineyard Theatre, 108 E. 15th St. 353-0303. Closes June 3.)

ENSEMBLE STUDIO THEATRE
Series B in this year's six-week marathon begins May 23 at 7:30 with plays by Frank D. Gilroy, Susan Kim, Laurence Klavan, and Ruth Kirschner. The series runs through June 3. The marathon continues through June 17. (549 W. 52nd St. 247-4982.)

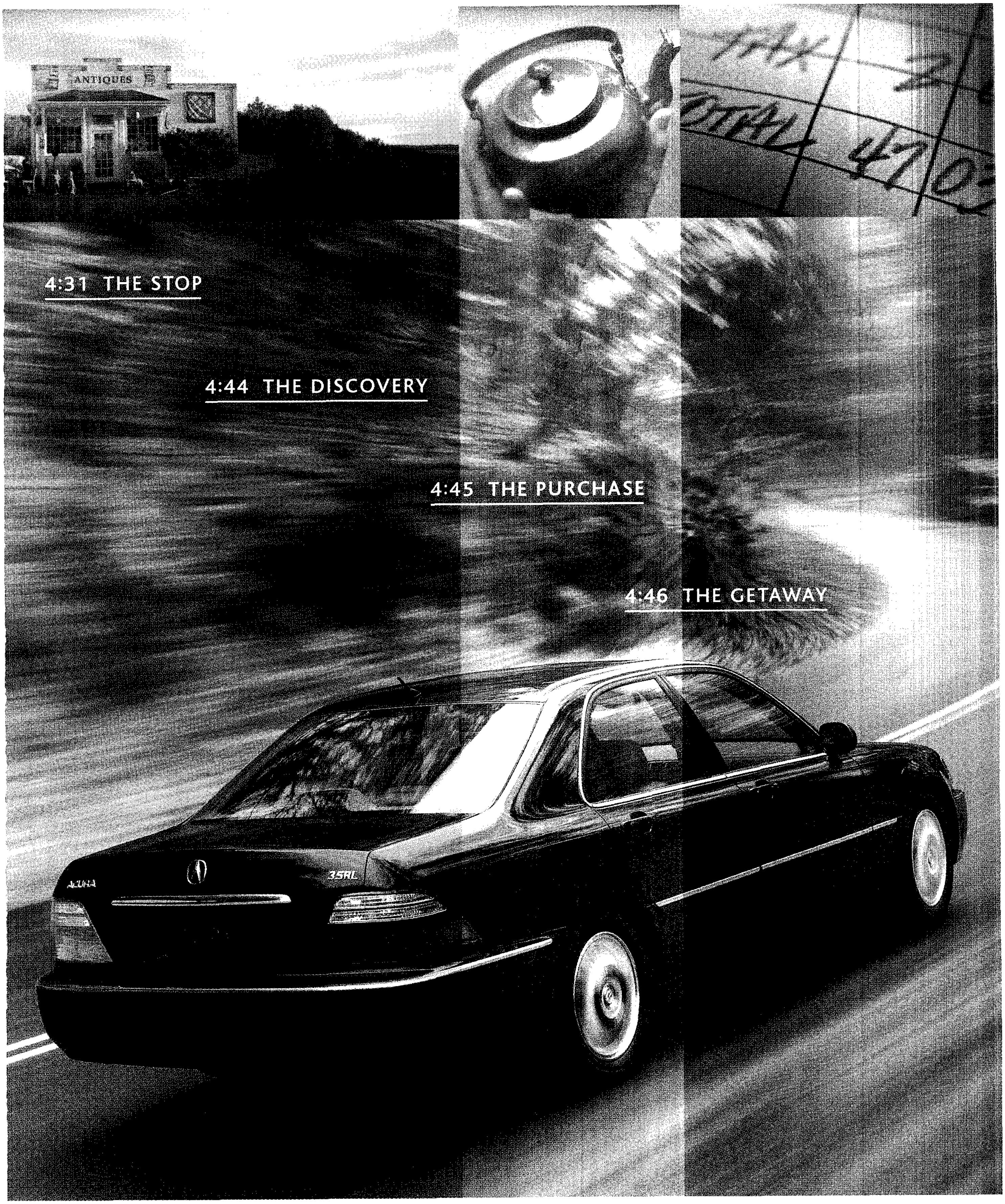
FOLLIES
This revival of Stephen Sondheim and James Goldman's landmark 1971 musical, which takes place at a reunion of Ziegfeld-like performers, is less lavish than the original production, but no matter: the show's real grandeur lies in its imaginative structure and the unfolding of its lyrically rich, resonant songs. In the hands of Matthew Warchus, who directed, the relentless, unblinking intelligence is intact. (4/23 & 30/01) (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

FORTY-SECOND STREET
As a domineering diva who breaks her ankle before the big opening night, the wonderful Christine Ebersole steals the show in this revival of the 1980 tap musical based on the 1933 film. But it has to be said: it was probably easy to do. As the young chorine who steps in to save the day, Kate Levering doesn't have enough star power to shine above the legions of hoofers who crowd the stage, and Michael Cumpsty, as the gruff director, is sorely miscast. Still, if this sort of show is your cup of tea, the songs are wonderful and the dancing is fine—just know that the cup is not quite full. (Ford Center, 213 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.)

GEORGE GERSHWIN ALONE
A one-man portrait with music, written and performed by Hershey Felder and directed by Joel Zwick. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 349-6200.)

THE GOOD THIEF
As the sole character onstage in Conor McPherson's hour-long monologue for an Irishman, Brian d'Arcy James narrates and relives a botched bit of thuggery and its aftermath, in which he accidentally kills a man and flees with the newly widowed, strangely placid Mrs. Mitchell and her small daughter, Neve. It cannot end well for these three, but amid the violence and mayhem—all offstage, summoned by the actor, whose eyes glitter dangerously—there are moments of redemption. (45 Bleecker Theatre, at 45 Bleecker St. 307-4100. Closes May 27.)

THE INVENTION OF LOVE
Tom Stoppard's witty, challenging account of the classicist and poet A. E. Housman and the love that not only dared not speak its name but didn't even have one until 1895 (when the word "homosexual" was coined). Jack O'Brien's well-directed, lucid production features a sumptuous set by Bob Crowley and some fine acting, especially by Richard Easton as the elder/dead Housman—he parses every sentence and joke so that the audience is never at sea—and Robert Sean Leonard as the young classicist in love. David Harbour also turns in a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4:44 THE DISCOVERY
4:45 THE PURCHASE
4:46 THE GETAWAY
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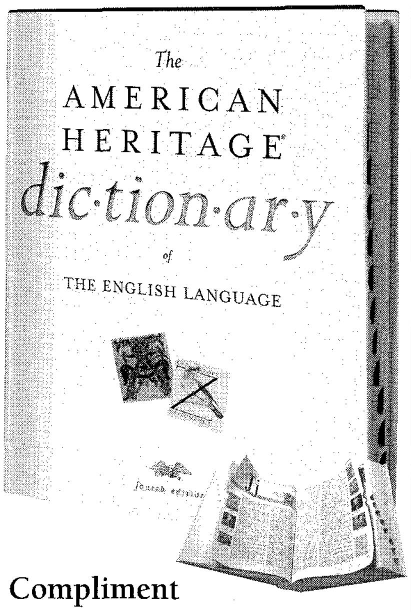

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vivid portrait as the sporty object of Housman's platonic affection. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

THE IT GIRL
The York Theatre Company presents a musical adaptation of "It," the 1927 movie that made Clara Bow a star. (Theatre at St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 239-6200. Closes May 27.)

JANE EYRE
John Caird and Paul Gordon's musical is respectful of and faithful to Brontë's original, but it needs to be brilliant and piercing, and it isn't. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100.)

KING HEDLEY II
August Wilson's new play, set in Pittsburgh in 1985, is a tale of rage, redemption, and Reaganomics. Its eponymous protagonist, played by Brian Stokes Mitchell, is eager to start anew after emerging from a long prison term for killing a man, but hard times and his own self-destructive ways seem to conspire against him. Despite some good performances by Viola Davis, Stephen McKinley Henderson, and Charles Brown, the play lacks psychological credibility, and its heavy cargo of symbolism and coincidence often makes it feel like a soap opera. Directed by Marion McClinton. (5/14/01) (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200.)

LIPSTICK TRACES
Greil Marcus's paean to punk rock, adapted for the stage by the Austin troupe Rude Mechs and presented by the Foundry Theatre. (Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster St. 800-965-4827. Closes June 10.)

LOBBY HERO
In another era, the contrivances of Kenneth Lonergan's new play would have been called hokum. It's set in a Manhattan apartment-house lobby and involves a slacker security guard, his ambitious boss, and two cops (a sleazy guy and an inept woman, who are investigating a murder and having an affair). But because Lonergan is the writer and director of the moving and successful film "You Can Count on Me" and the author of the acclaimed plays "This Is Our Youth" and "The Waverly Gallery," the public is expecting him to aim high. He does, and misses. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

LOVE, JANIS
A musical play about Janis Joplin, at the spiffy new theatre that was formerly the Village Gate, built around her songs, writings, and interviews. Though it contains no new insight, it's a useful corrective to the drunken, drug-addicted legend, and the production is a fine one. Randal Myler directed with a sure eye for the telling detail, and the seven-member band really cooks. Two singers alternate as "singing Janis"; on a recent night Cathy Richardson was in splendid voice and demeanor. The backbone of the evening, however, is Catherine Curtin's "speaking Janis." It's an intelligent, vulnerable, self-aware performance that transcends the Janis myth and showcases the talent of a powerful actress. (Village Theatre, 158 Bleecker St. 307-4100.)

MADAME MELVILLE
Mature audiences may be split down the middle on Richard Nelson's much lauded coming-of-age drama; in it the waifish former child star Macaulay Culkin (now twenty) portrays an American high-school student in nineteen-sixties Paris, who grows up at the hands of his much older French teacher (Joely Richardson, who seems to be channelling the spirit of Claudine Longet). Although it's about as fresh as a forgotten slice of Camembert at the back of your refrigerator, the play understandably evokes pleasurable adolescent fantasies for men. For the rest of the population, it's more likely to evoke the heebie-jeebies. Stale story aside, Culkin's stilted, sing-songy delivery and fragile demeanor are so grating that even the most unstable, immature, or sexually predatory woman would kick him out of bed—if she let him get there at all. The bright light is Robin Weigert, who plays Richardson's live-wire neighbor, a recently liberated New Jersey housewife pursuing her dream of making a living as a cellist. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.)

MNEMONIC
For sheer theatrical aplomb—the exhilarating marriage of the surreal body to the surreal intellect—nothing can top this latest show by the actor and director Simon McBurney and his Theatre de Complicite. (4/9/01) (John Jay College, 899 Tenth Ave., at 58th St. 239-6200. Closes May 24.)

NOCTURNE
In Adam Rapp's new drama, a young man must deal with the aftermath of his sister's death, which he accidentally caused. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 239-6200.)

ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST
Dale Wasserman's severely dated adaptation of Ken Kesey's 1962 novel—a broad allegory, set in a mental hospital, about the perils of nonconformity—is a quaint relic, but as staged by Chicago's excellent Steppenwolf Theatre it's a well-acted one. Gary Sinise leads the cast, as the incorrigible mental patient Randle P. McMurphy. Terry Kinney is the director. (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

PEARL THEATRE COMPANY
Jean-François Regnard's 1708 comedy, "A Will of His Own," runs in repertory with Racine's "Andromache." (80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802.)

THE PLAY ABOUT THE BABY
In Edward Albee's new play, an older couple provide a harsh taste of what life has in store for a young couple with a new baby: the ravages of adulthood, the tidal wave of troubles and injuries that come with time. Brian Murray and Marian Seldes, two veterans who are rarely less than riveting, make the most of Albee's sharp, enigmatic writing; their

POP NOTES

ROCK SPRING: NEW RELEASES
R.E.M. may stand for "rapid eye movement," but there's nothing rapid about the band anymore. After the group's last record, the gray, plodding "Up," the band's more charitable fans can take some satisfaction from **"Reveal"** (Warner Bros.). It's hardly a return to form—the adrenalized jangle pop that made them the dominant college band of the eighties is most likely gone for good—but the album suggests that the glacial pace and spooky electronic touches of "Up" were part of a battle plan instead of a kind of surrender. This time around, slower tracks like "I've Been High" and "Summer Turns to High" sink in rather than drift away, and the lead single, "Imitation of Life," is the group's most appealing confection in years.

There's something slightly foolish about calling a Black Crowes album new, since the band cribs so shamelessly from the classic rock of the early seventies. Last year, the Crowes toured with the Led Zeppelin guitarist Jimmy Page, and it's easy to hear Page's influence on the dense, guitar-soaked **"Lions"** (V2). It's also easy to feel that the Crowes are trying too hard to impress their idols—the opening track, "Midnight from the Inside Out," grinds more than it grooves, and "Soul Singing" is a forced good time instead of a real one. But for the most part "Lions" is another solid record from America's finest straight-ahead rock-and-roll band, with greasy raveups ("Lickin'"), moving ballads ("Miracle to Me"), and plenty of preening from the lead singer, Chris Robinson.

It's been more than twenty years since the release of a new Ian Hunter record could be expected to cause a stir. That's a shame, given that **"Rant"** (Fuel 2000), the new album by the former Mott the Hoople front man, is one of the most satisfying collections of the year. This may sound like cant, or nostalgia-fuelled delusion, but it's absolutely true—Hunter's ability to move between tenderness and rage is intact, and if his vocals have thinned slightly over the years, his band more than compensates. Among the highlights are the expat jeremiad "American Spy" and "Knees of My Heart," an ode to Hunter's wife of almost thirty years which sounds like Bob Dylan covering the Byrds, instead of the other way around.

—*Ben Greenman*

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

Pursuant to the aforementioned stipulations specified in article IV. S[illegible] through f, the u[illegible]l, Mr. Henry J. Peterson, acknowledges that he has read and understands the foregoi[illegible]ovisions and employ[illegible]irements. This authorization will rem[illegible] irrevocable and for as long as the aforementioned under signed remai[illegible]d a citizen of the United States. Furth[illegible]e undersigned Henry J. Peterson ______________will hereby be kn[illegible]nd referred to as [illegible] Peterson, [illegible] under the aliases "Henry Joe, "Henry," "Hank," "Joe-boy," and "Slappy," until [illegible]otice or unless [illegible] the documents contained herein. Signed ________________________ Henry [illegible]. I, the undersigned, [illegible]efute and officially retract the above statements and deem th[illegible] to be untrue, a[illegible] more "hogwash" and thereby nullify and void the agreement specified therein until furth[illegible]d/or until n[illegible]nqualified legal counsel. Signed ________________________ Henry J. Peterson, [illegible]l, ope[illegible]der the aliases listed above and bel[illegible] exercise my rights, duties, or res[illegible]ed in the article[illegible]ncorporation, or cannot exercise my [illegible]ceps, quads, or pectorals, hereb[illegible] simultaneously un-assign non-durable powers to my fictitious and [illegible] spouse, hereby known as Mrs[illegible]. K. Peterson. Signed ________________________ Henry J. Peterso[illegible] ______________________ Mrs. Cindy K. Peterson. For good and valuable consideration, the undersigned her[illegible]ates the rates at which he will be compensated for his services, startin[illegible]% of gross margin, with increment[illegible]es implemented every 30 seconds from the time of signing. Late fees [illegible] will be levied in an unfair and u[illegible]anner entirely at the discretion of the undersigned, with no provisi[illegible]al on the part of the vendor at any time, including the 60 day "limbo" period as specified in no other documen[illegible] drawn. Signed ________________________ Henry J. Peterson. The above provisions include and are not lim[illegible]aforementioned parties, Henry J. Peterson, his wife, his child, any affiliated companies and business associates, o[illegible]fficers, agents, the Easter Bunny, Santa Claus, and [illegible] guy I went to college with but can't for the life of me reme[illegible]his name. Signed ________________________ [illegible] the least of my ability, I agree to making a batch of fresh cookies and delivering them, [illegible]m, to m[illegible]d ________________________. Henry J. Peterson

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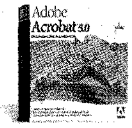

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highly stylized, virtuosic performances here are stunning. David Esbjornson directed. (2/19 & 26/01) (Century Center, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

THE PRODUCERS
High-camp heaven from Mel Brooks, who wrote the music and the lyrics for this monster-hit version of his 1968 movie—in which two scoundrels try to bilk their investors by staging a surefire failure, entitled "Springtime for Hitler." What's first-rate about this particular seduction is Brooks's antic imagination and the atmosphere of audacious liberty with which he turns atrocity into travesty (a fabulous high-kicking chorus in swastika formation sings to "ev'ry hotsy-totsy Nazi"). With the help of his deft and witty co-author, Thomas Meehan, Brooks reins in his compulsion to tell four jokes where one will do, and the jokes he does tell almost always hit their marks. The performing centerpiece of the show is Nathan Lane, as the flamboyant huckster Bialystock; his kind of high-amperage panache is in limited supply these days, and both he and the excellent Matthew Broderick, as the hapless accountant Leo Bloom, deliver the mail. Expertly staged by Susan Stroman. (5/7/01) (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

CULTURE IS SHIT

"Lipstick Traces," an adaptation of the Greil Marcus book by the Austin, Texas, theatre company Rude Mechs.

KATHARINA BOSSE

THE RIGHT WAY TO SUE
A successful career woman and Upper West Side mother keeps misplacing her newborn baby, in a comedy by Ellen Melaver, staged by New Georges. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., at Spring St. 647-0202.)

SEE BOB RUN
Daniel MacIvor's drama about a talkative hitchhiker (Susan O'Connor). (Rattlestick Theatre, 224 Waverly Pl. 627-2556. Closes June 3.)

SEUSSICAL
For all the whimsy of Theodor Geisel's doggerel, what's missing in this relentlessly cute musical by the team of Lynn Ahrens and Stephen Flaherty is mayhem and magic. It's a show with curiously little charm. (12/25/00 & 1/1/01) (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

SHUT UP AND LOVE ME
The performance artist Karen Finley's latest one-woman show. Wednesdays through Sundays at 8, through June 2. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288.)

SINCERITY FOREVER
A Bat Theatre Company revival of Mac Wellman's 1991 play. (Flea Theatre, 41 White St., between Broadway and Church St. 226-2407. Closes May 26.)

SO LONG AGO I CAN'T REMEMBER: A DIVINE COMEDY
The latest multimedia production by the troupe Gale Gates et al. takes its inspiration from Dante. (37 Main St., Brooklyn. 718-522-4597.)

STONES IN HIS POCKETS
Marie Jones's play is set in an Irish village where a big-budget Hollywood movie is being made. Conleth Hill and Seán Campion play two extras in the movie and all thirteen other characters as well, including the movie's female star, its director, and various locals. Though the play has its clever ways when it comes to sending up both Hollywood and Irish mores, the stories told here aren't anything you haven't seen before. (4/16/01) (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

THIEF RIVER
Gregg Edelman stars in a new play by Lee Blessing, under the direction of Mark Lamos. (Signature Theatre, 555 W. 42nd St. 244-7529.)

URINETOWN: THE MUSICAL
A musical comedy by Mark Hollmann and Greg Kotis, about a city in a state of ecological disaster. John Rando is the director. (American Theatre of Actors, 314 W. 54th St. 239-6200.)

LONG RUNS

AIDA
Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4747.

ANNIE GET YOUR GUN
Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST
Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4747.

BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES
Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370.

CABARET
Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 239-6200.

CHICAGO
Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

CONTACT
Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.

DE LA GUARDA
Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 239-6200.

THE DINNER PARTY
Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.

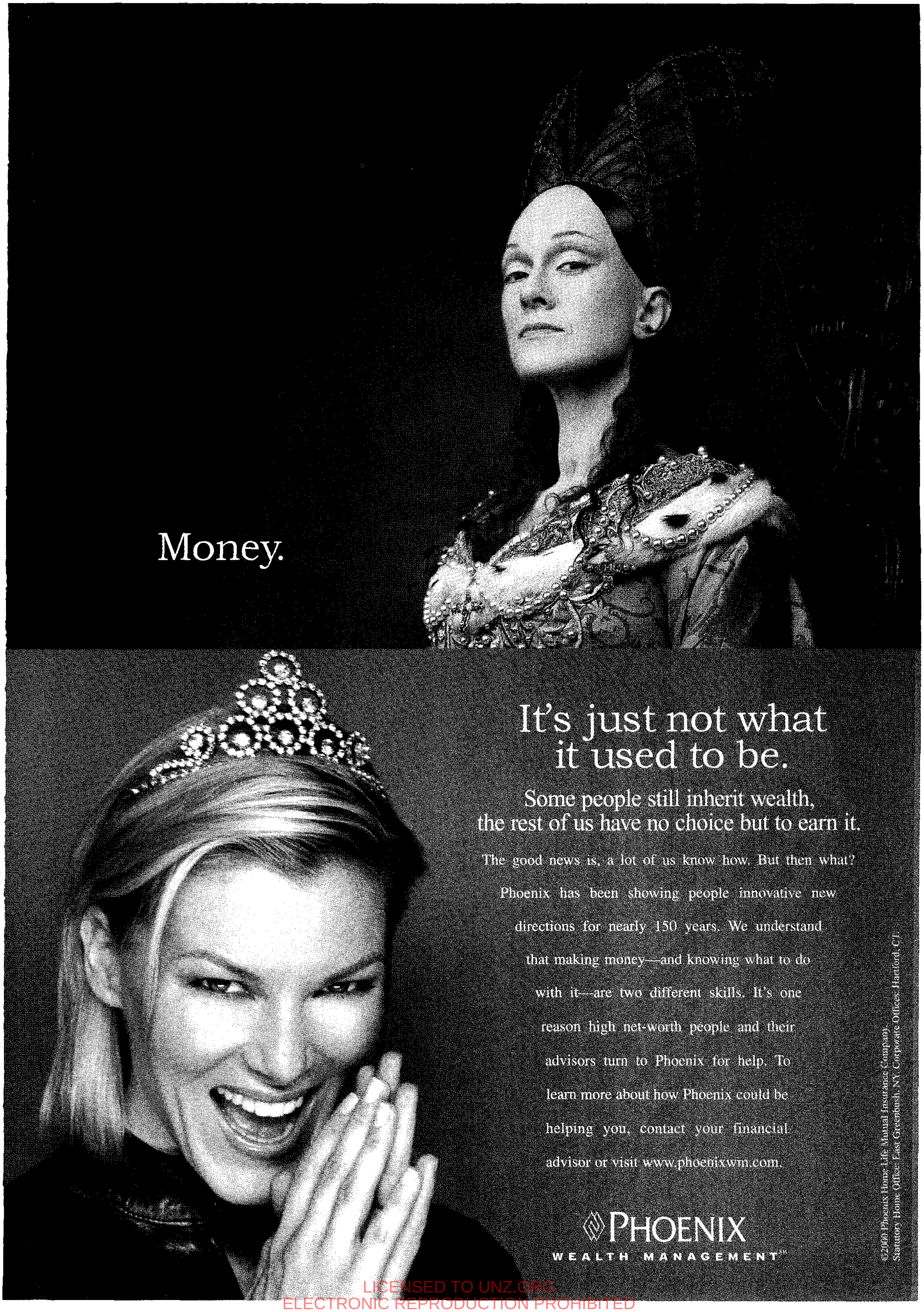
DINNER WITH FRIENDS
Variety Arts, 110 Third Ave., at 14th St. 239-6200. (Closes May 27.)

THE FANTASTICKS
Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838.

FORBIDDEN BROADWAY 2001: A SPOOF ODYSSEY
Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.

FOSSE
Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

THE FULL MONTY
Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200.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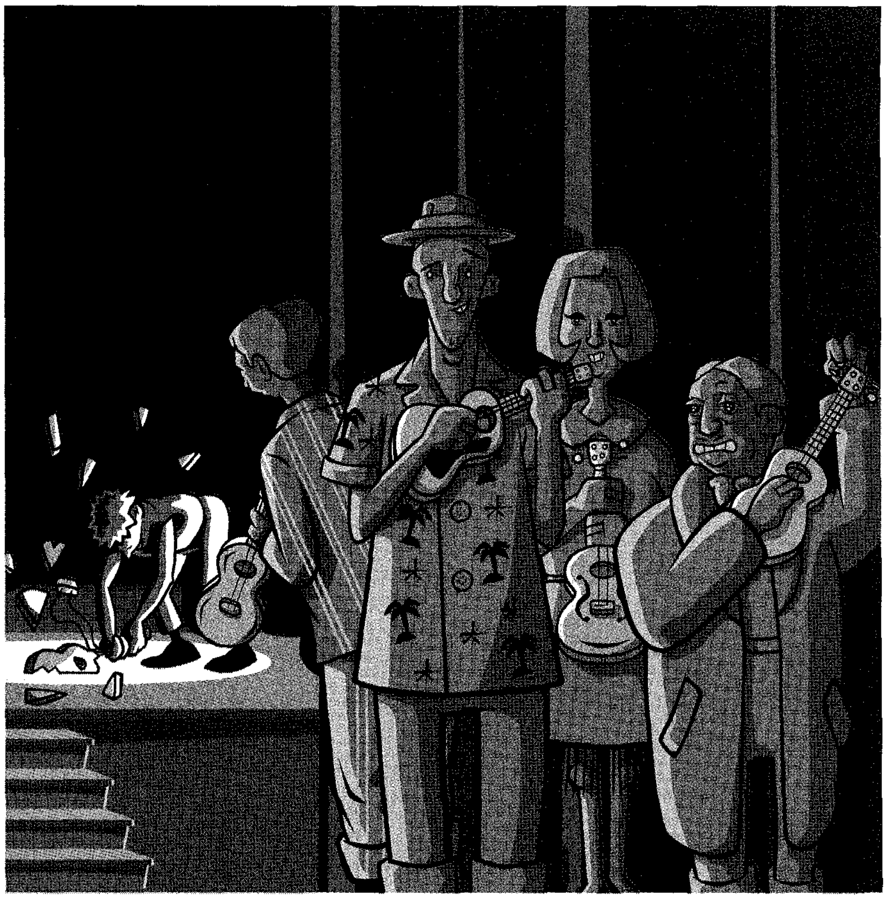

The New Uke, New York Ukulele Festival at Joe's Pub this weekend (see Night Life).

MICHAEL WELDON

FULLY COMMITTED
Cherry Lane Theatre, 38 Commerce St. 239-6200. (Closes May 27.)

KISS ME, KATE
Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.

THE LION KING
New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.

LES MISÉRABLES
Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200.

THE MUSIC MAN
Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.

PERFECT CRIME
Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401.

THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

PROOF
Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.

RENT
Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000.

THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW
Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.

STOMP
Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 477-2477.

THE SYRINGA TREE
Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 307-4100.

THE TALE OF THE ALLERGIST'S WIFE
Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.

TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING
St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200.

THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.

DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET
"I like watching ballets best of all at rehearsals when a dancer is just working for himself. They are beautiful to watch then," Jerome Robbins told Edwin Denby in 1969, the year that "Dances at a Gathering" premièred. In that work, which N.Y.C.B. performs four times in the next two weeks, the dancers do seem to be dancing for themselves and for one another, exchanging sublimely simple steps, ignited by a sudden, seemingly casual chance to dance. By some kind of homely magic, helped along by the Chopin waltzes, études, and mazurkas, "Dances at a Gathering" bares these essential impulses. The N.Y.C.B. cast is sure to include such pure, unmannered dancers as Jenifer Ringer and Damian Woetzel. May 23 at 8: "Walpurgisnacht Ballet," "Dances at a Gathering," and "Concerti Armonici." ♦ May 24 at 8: "La Source," "La Sonnambula," and "Cortège Hongrois." ♦ May 25 at 8: "Walpurgisnacht Ballet," "Valse Triste," "Ancient Airs and Dances," and "Cortège Hongrois." ♦ May 26 at 2: "Concerti Armonici," "Moves," and "Firebird." ♦ May 26 at 8: "Walpurgisnacht Ballet," "Dances at a Gathering," and "Swan Lake." ♦ May 27 at 3: "Fanfare," "La Sonnambula," and "Jeu de Cartes." ♦ May 29 at 8: "Walpurgisnacht Ballet," "Dances at a Gathering," and "Ancient Airs and Dances." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. Through July 1.)

AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE
May 23 at 2 and 8 and May 24 at 8: "La Bayadère, Act II" and "The Pied Piper." ♦ May 25 and May 28-29 at 8 and May 26 at 2 and 8: "The Merry Widow." (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000. Through June 23.)

DANCE AFRICA
The twenty-fourth-anniversary season of the series directed by Chuck Davis features the Ndere troupe of Uganda performing songs and dances from their native land; the New York-based Forces of Nature; the BAM/Restoration DanceAfrica Ensemble, a company of young dancers from Bed-Stuy; and Sabar Ak Ru Afriq, from Brooklyn. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. May 25 at 7:30, May 26 at 2 and 7:30, and May 27 at 3.)

DANCE BRAZIL
The company, under the direction of Jelon Viera, performs two new works: one relies on choreographed capoeira, the Brazilian dance-based martial art; the other, "The Ritual of the Divinities," reinter-

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prets candomblé rites, based on African rituals. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. May 22-26 at 8 and May 27 at 2 and 7:30.)

"CRASH TEST DUMMIES"
The dance and performance troupe Antigravity presents a full-length work involving extreme product testing: catapulting onto mattresses, spinning upside down on test helmets, flying while wrapped in cellophane. (New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. May 24-25 at 7, May 26 at 2 and 7, and May 27 at noon and 5. Through June 3.)

NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

VISION FESTIVAL
The New York jazz-festival season starts off with the edgiest musical cavalcade of them all. During its first week, the Vision Festival, now in its sixth year, holds aloft the banner of avant-garde and free jazz at the Knitting Factory. Highlights include the following. May 24: A duet between the full-force tenor saxophonist **David S. Ware** and the drummer **Rashied Ali,** whose experience includes having gone head-to-head with John Coltrane. May 25: **Dave Burrell** offers a solo piano recital; there's also a performance by the California avant legend **Sonny Simmons** and his trio. May 26: The multi-instrumentalist **Karl Berger** presents duets with an all-star roster that includes **Dave Holland, Mark Feldman, James (Blood) Ulmer,** and **Ray Anderson.** May 27: The saxophone individualist **Oliver Lake** joins the percussionist **Badal Roy** and the fabled British (by way of South Africa) drummer **Louis Moholo.** May 28: Three tenor saxophone terrors hold forth: **Kidd Jordan** leads a quartet, **Frank Wright** presents his Center of the World Band, and **Frank Lowe** sits in with the Rashied Ali quintet. May 29: The brilliantly interactive C/D/E Trio features the drummer **Andrew Cyrille,** the bassist **Mark Desser,** and the saxophonist **Marty Ehrlich;** there's also an appearance by the jazz bagpiper **Rufus Harley,** a man who hasn't had to worry about competing players since he arrived on the scene in the early sixties. (74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. 219-3006. For more information, visit www.visionfestival.org. Through June 8.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

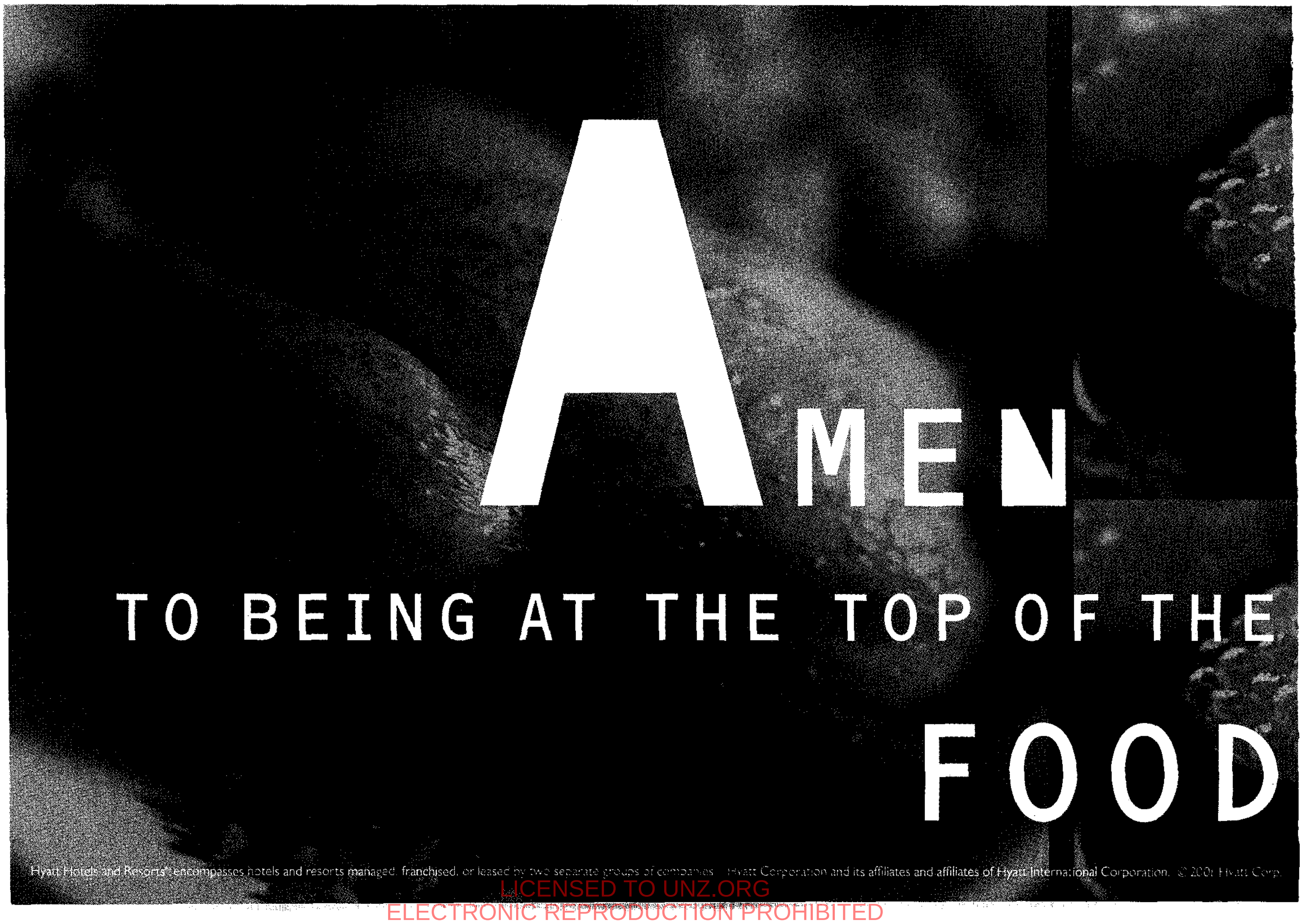
B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (997-4144)—May 24: **Maceo Parker.** A fifteen-year veteran of James Brown's legendary JBs and a pivotal member of the Parliament/Funkadelic empire, this tenor saxophonist can still thrill. May 25: Irony-free stalwarts of ultra-lite freedom rock, the seventies-era duo **America** (formerly a trio, before founding member Dan Peek succumbed to the temptations of a solo career in contemporary Christian rock) spawned a few mild-as-soy-milk hits in their thirty-odd years, including "Sister Golden Hair" and the arguably timeless "Horse with No Name."

BOHEMIAN HALL & PARK
29-19 Twenty-fourth Ave., Astoria (718-274-4925)—Up until the early twentieth century, beer gardens were a fixture of several neighborhoods in the city, central meeting places where immigrant families would gather to eat, drink, sing, and dance. Most of these outdoor enclaves have gone the way of the zeppelin, but at least one remains. In the Bohemian Hall's garden, beneath the leafy expanse of two dozen eighty-year-old maple and sycamore trees, a sea of red picnic tables surrounds a small wooden stage. Pilsner, of course, is on tap, and an assortment of Czech beers and snacks is also available. The nineteenth annual Czech and Slovak Festival (May 27-28, starting at noon), featuring traditional dance, music, and food, marks the opening of the garden for the summer.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—May 24: **Russell Simins,** a burly, powerhouse drummer, is best known for his work behind the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion, but he has also fronted the highly touted combo Butter 08 (aided by members of Cibo Matto and Skeleton Key) and released a disk of his own music: a heavily Beck-inspired mélange of rock and skewed hip-hop.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—May 28-29: Fronted by the helium-voiced pixie Brian Molko, Britain's **Placebo** has fought heartily to revive gender-bending glam rock. Despite a handful of controversy-inciting singles and lascivious extracurricular activities, the band is dogged by constant comparisons to the straitlaced Canadian prog-metal mainstays Rush, due to the eerie similarities between Molko's vocals and the singing of Geddy Lee. Rush, however, was never this sexy. With the ear-cleaning revival punk of Glasgow's **Idlewild.** ♦ The Swing Dance Society gathers here every Sunday, with sets from eight until midnight. For information on the Society, call 696-9737.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (539-8777)—May 26-27: **The New Uke, New York Ukulele Festival.** Memorial Day weekend means getting out of town, hitting the beaches, and the start of the summer social season on the east end of Long Island. Or not. Those in the latter camp will have the rare opportunity to experience the joy and passion of the ukulele, the four-stringed Hawaiian instrument of Arthur Godfrey and Tiny Tim. The first night features the singer and ukulele player Robin Goldwasser and the accordionist Brian Dewan, along with the inventive combo Songs from a Random House and the madcap trio White Knuckle Sandwich. The following evening, the Haoles, Miss Ewa's Hawai-



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ian Trio, and the Moonlighters take you back to the days when there were forty-eight states in the union and the ukulele was all the rage.

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—May 23: The **Ladybug Transistor's** co-leader Gary Olson is a Brooklyn native, and he and his bandmates seem to have inherited Walt Whitman's vision of the borough, where, as the poet once wrote, one can wander its "ample hills" and feel "curious abrupt questionings." The Ladybugs have a new album, "Argyle Heir," which was recorded, as were previous efforts, at Marlborough Farms, their self-named band headquarters, near Prospect Park. It's filled with their daydream-inducing, meticulously textured music (featuring guitars, drums, bass, piano, trumpet, flute, mandolin, violin, organ, and xylophone). This time around, the bucolic songs are touched with the sadness of growing pains. During their playful, rollicking live shows, look for the group members to switch instruments midsong.

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—May 23: The **Dana Fuchs Band.** This local singer and her band turn out rocking world-weary, blues-infused originals that come to life with her burnished voice. She takes the stage tonight to celebrate the release of her album, "Lonely for a Lifetime."

VILLAGE UNDERGROUND
130 W. 3rd St. (777-7745)—May 24-27: **Rod Argent** and **Colin Blunstone.** Apparently, the sixties are not over. The Zombies were part of the first wave of the British Invasion: "She's Not There" and "Tell Her No" were two of the biggest and most distinctive hits of the decade, somehow infusing a jazzy syncopation and a classical lilt into the rock base. The singer Blunstone and the keyboardist Argent have reunited to record the U.K. album "Out of the Shadows," their first collaboration since the Zombies disbanded in 1968 after releasing the landmark album "Odyssey and Oracle."

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—May 23-26: The **Legends of the Bandstand.** It's not that difficult to catch sixties-style hard bop and modal jazz these days, but this group has the edge—each of its members was there to perfect the music in its prime. The masterful personnel includes the saxophonist **Gary Bartz,** the trombonist **Curtis Fuller,** the pianist **Cedar Walton,** the bassist **Buster Williams,** and the drummer **Louis Hayes,** who all graduated from the finishing schools of either Miles Davis, Art Blakey, or Horace Silver. Dining.

CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound pastel murals, and, through June 23, the magisterially puckish **Bobby Short.** ♦ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **Barbara Carroll** is in attendance at the piano through June 23.

FEINSTEIN'S AT THE REGENCY
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (339-4095)—Playing straight woman to her then husband Louis Prima during that wild man's fifties heyday gave **Keely Smith** (here through May 26) permanent neo-hipster status, but her superior talents as a mainstream vocalist are still undervalued.

IRIDIUM
48 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through May 27: The **Mike Stern** quartet. Like far too many contemporary jazz guitarists, Stern has a bad case of run-on fingers, but his silken tone and flair for authentic bebop phrasing lift him above the fray. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—Through May 24: The **String Trio of N.Y.** This compact, feisty, and rigorous chamber-jazz ensemble, comprised of the bassist **John Lindberg,** the guitarist **James Emery,** and the latest member, the violinist **Rob Thomas,** has been making generous sounds for some twenty-five years. The engagement here includes a newly commissioned piece by the trumpeter Dave Douglas, and the show is being recorded for a live album. May 25-27: The **Jason Linder Ensemble.** You get the whole deal with the pianist Linder: inventive, wide-ranging playing, pointed composing, and bandleading that exhibits vision rather than obedience to tradition. He's making great strides year by year—keep an eye on him. ♦ **Note:** The club closes on June 28 for renovations. It is expected to reopen in the fall. Dining.

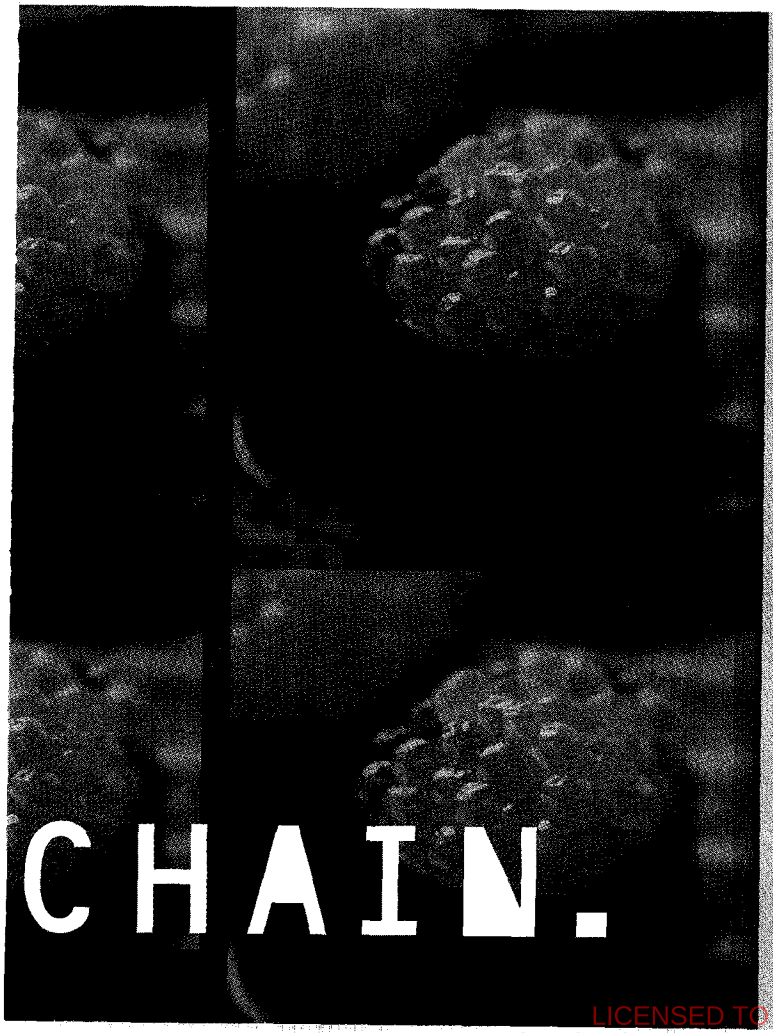
MAKOR
35 W. 67th St. (601-1000)—May 24: The vocalist **Nora York's** clever conflations of iconic pop, jazz, gospel, and what-have-you are ingenious, but her affecting originals are what truly expose the quirky strength of this extravagant talent. Tonight she presents a new program entitled "Redemption: It's All in How You Look at It."

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through May 27: The **Mark Turner** quartet. The promising quartet that Turner has assembled along with the guitarist **Kurt Rosenwinkle** and the combustive rhythm section of the bassist **Reid Anderson** and the drummer **Nasheet Waits** is still finding its sea legs, but its leader has already carved out a place for himself as one of today's most intriguing young saxophone stylists. His tenor reconciles the hot and cool schools of horn playing. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—With fifteen paintings by Vermeer (and possibly a sixteenth, "Young Woman Seated at a Virginal," which has



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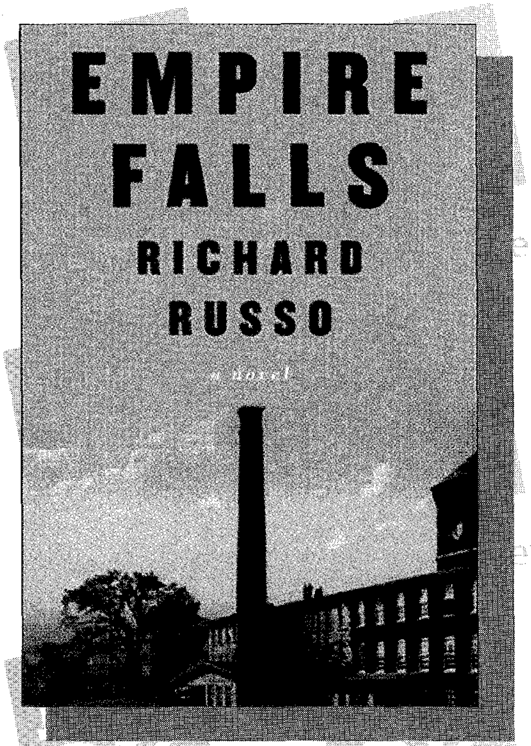

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PERSONALITY - PASSION - KNOWLEDGE - COMMUNITY - CHARACTER

his luminously impersonal touch), five by the tragically short-lived Fabritius, who may have been his teacher, and ten by his great rival De Hooch, **"Vermeer and the Delft School"** offers an encyclopedic look at the milieu that formed the calmest genius of the seventeenth century. This is the Met at its best: a stately procession of masterpieces, accompanied by informative, sometimes tart commentary. Through May 27. ♦ With a consort of star-struck press and film clips and more than eighty original outfits, **"Jacqueline Kennedy: The White House Years"** reminds viewers of the sensuous, almost brash propriety of the "Jackie look." The essentials are familiar: big buttons, solid colors, carefully chosen fabrics (breathtaking pink-and-white raffia lace for a dinner in Paris; spartan black Alaskine for an audience with the Pope). But their minimalist glamour remains bewitching, and it's moving to see, in the First Lady's handwritten letters to Oleg Cassini and other collaborators, her combination of meticulous planning and self-mockery. "Dear Marta," a letter to a Bergdorf's saleswoman begins, "Here goes—an order for a million hats." Through July 29. ♦ **"William Blake"** includes more than a hundred and seventy-five works by the British painter, printmaker, and poet. Through June 24. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—**"About Face,"** an exhibition of more than fifty works from the museum's collection, includes "The Weeping Woman," Picasso's 1939 portrait of Dora Maar, as well as faces by Edvard Munch ("The Sick Child"), Max Beckmann ("Self-Portrait with Bowler Hat"), and Sherrie Levine's remake of Marcel Duchamp's take on the "Mona Lisa." Through June 5. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 5:45; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:15.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—**"Frank Gehry: Architect."** Through Aug. 26. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—**"BitStreams,"** the museum's survey of digitally enhanced art work, features photographs, videos, digitally designed sculptures, and a generous sampling of sound works. Through June 10. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, Fridays, 1 to 9.)

P.S. 1 CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER
22-25 Jackson Ave., at 46th Ave., Long Island City (718-784-2084)—Carla Accardi's pioneering "Triplice Tenda" (1969), in clear plastic and pale-pink paint, is obviously art—it's not practical enough to be anything else. But the three members of Los Carpinteros, who have ten of their recent portable shelters on show, prefer to muddy Accardi's distinction between the poetic and the functional. Their constructions—of aluminum tubing, nylon canvas, netting, and zipper—take the shapes of major Cuban landmarks, such as the capitol building and the Morro lighthouse in Havana, and look professionally sewn, even watertight. A Martha Stewart of the *Revolución* might serve dinner in the one with the vaulted ceiling. Through Sept. 3. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6. Brooklyn galleries are open Fridays through Sundays.

WAYNE THIEBAUD
Back in the sixties, Thiebaud's paintings of custards, cakes, hot dogs, and cream pies were gobbled up by a public eager for wry, recognizable icons. Critics—and who can blame them?—linked his sweets to Oldenberg's spoons and Warhol's soup cans. By now, though, it seems clear that Thiebaud

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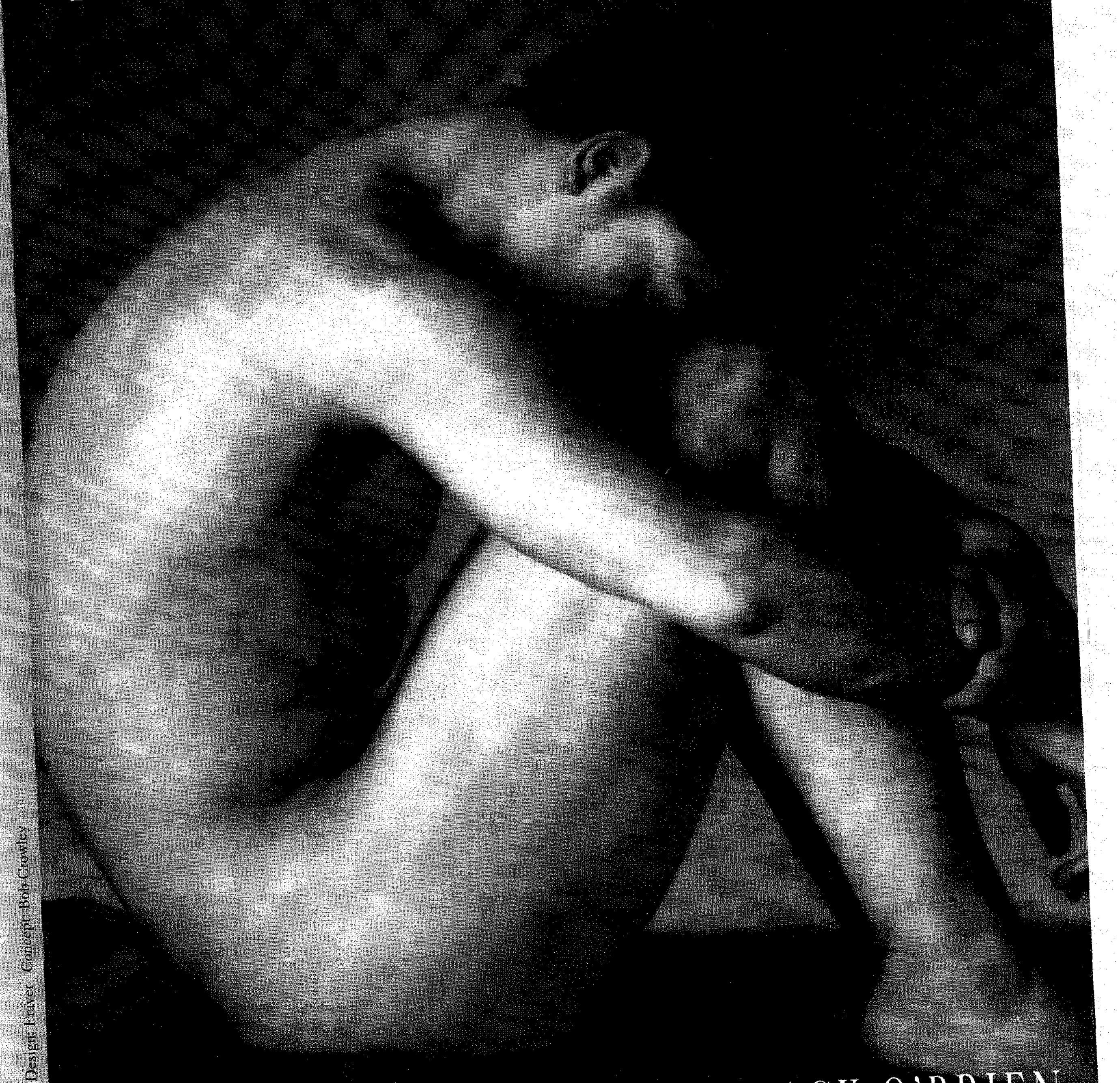

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—Winer, Newsday

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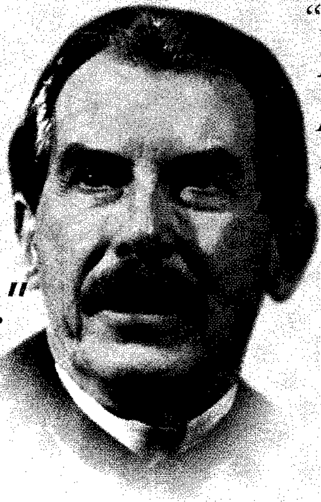
— Brantley, NY Times



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never had much in common with the nouvelle cuisine of Pop art. A glance at his subsequent paintings of vertiginous San Francisco streets and sherbety farmland reminds us that Thiebaud's sunniness is irony-free. He's a traditionalist, albeit one with a light heart and a deliciously heavy touch. Through July 12. (Stone, 113 E. 90th St. 987-4997.)

"CÔTE D'AZUR"
Much of high modernism happened at or near the beach, as the art historian Kenneth Silver reminds us in "Making Paradise," his new book about the French Riviera. For those too lazy to read it, Silver has obligingly curated this handsome show. Along with the expected cast of marquee names—Matisse, Picasso, Dufy, and company—it's a pleasure to come across less obvious choices, such as Charlotte Salomon, George Grosz, and Eric Fischl. For sheer summery charm, however, almost nothing here can compete with a wall of photographs by Jacques-Henri Lartigue, whose love of cars and sybarites could melt the sternest ascetic's id. Through July 14. (AXA, 787 Seventh Ave., at 51st St. 554-4818.)

Short List

LOUISE BOURGEOIS
C & M, 45 E. 78th St. 861-0020.
Through June 9.

BERNARD CHAET
David Findlay, 41 E. 57th St. 486-7660.
Through June 2.

INKA ESSENHIGH
Mary Boone, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.
752-2929. Through June 23.

RON MUECK
James Cohan, 41 W. 57th St. 755-7171.
Through June 16.

GALLERIES-CHELSEA

RICHMOND BURTON
Collectively titled "I Am," Burton's dazzling series of decorative abstractions—he's a direct descendant of the New York School—conjures a pandemonium of associations, from Gustav Klimt to kilims to Lee Krasner. Each painting is constructed like a mosaic (think of the controlled chaos of Antonio Gaudi), with myriad marks coalescing into dense patterns reminiscent of a peacock-feather fan or airy kaleidoscopic grids. This is painting untouched by the age of mechanical reproduction; Burton fast-forwards from Pollock to the present as if Warhol's silk screens were just a pesky rumor. Through June 30. (Cheim & Read, 521 W. 23rd St. 242-7727.)

JACQUELINE HUMPHRIES
The artist's new paintings, saturated in a hothouse palette of coral, cerulean, and green, are an antidote to winter and a dramatic shift from the austerity of her previous black canvases. At once lush and minimal, the relatively large paintings—most measure more than seven by eight feet—are at their strongest when most monochromatic. In "Untitled (Blue)," a nearly transparent scrim of aquatic drips veils the lazulite ground, its surface ruptured by the occasional vertical slice of white. Through June 9. (Greene Naftali, 526 W. 26th St. 463-7770.)

GLENN LIGON
Ligon continues his double-barrelled approach to making art, a marriage of racial politics and post-Pop painting. But viewers expecting his trademark black-and-white appropriated-text paintings are in for a big surprise. His new work depicts line drawings found in seventies African-American coloring books, silk-screened onto primed canvas, then scribbled over with Crayola-colored marks, so that Malcolm X has red clown cheeks and a bright-pink mouth, while Harriet Tubman radiates a rainbow of concentric halos. If this sounds like child's play, it's because the compositions were created in collaboration with primary schoolers. This deceptively simple show finds Ligon as subversively eloquent as ever. Through June 9. (D'Amelio Terras, 525 W. 22nd St. 352-9460.)

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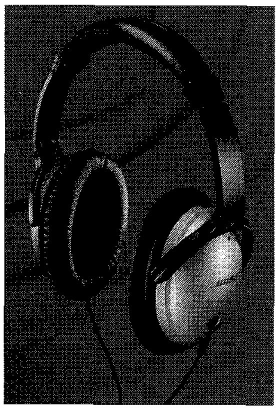

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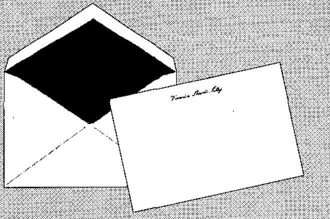

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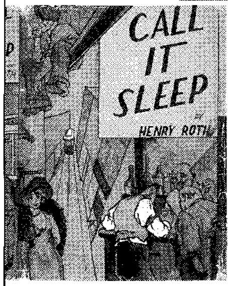

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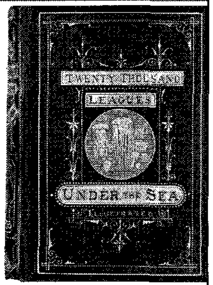

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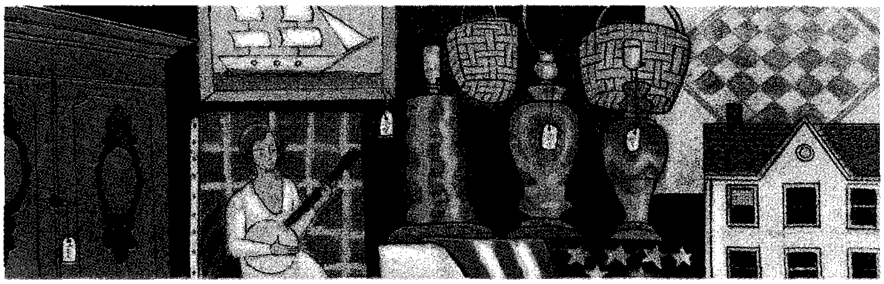


EDEL RODRIGUEZ

If it wasn't piled high with twenty-three hundred dollars' worth of velvet comforters and hand-stitched pillows, the iron bed on the third floor of **ABC CARPET & HOME** (888 Broadway; 473-3000) would have fit right in at Miss Hannigan's orphanage. Though its battered headboard and footboard are convincingly timeworn, they're actually factory fresh, and coexist just fine with the rest of the store's stock of authentic and ersatz flea-market finds, which recently included a restored crocodile steamer trunk ($9,000) and a standing lamp with a shade made from a piano shawl ($825). Amid the tin tubs and pedestal sinks in the bath department are Depression-green wood-framed mirrors and jewelry chests (around $150) trimmed with flower decals that look like they were made in a prewar shop class. A startling mélange of fabrics—figured damask, Biedermeier striped cotton, and a thick carved plush of the kind that once upholstered chairs at the Roxy—has been made up into what is either a huge chair or a small sofa, depending on the size of your room ($3,795). It may look like a Victorian folly, but it, too, is contemporary, which is why the stuffing isn't bursting through the arms.

The plump fainting couches and boudoir chairs at **SHABBY CHIC** (83 Wooster St.; 274-9842) manage to conceal their innards too, though every other indication—deliberately sloppy slipcovers, floor-sweeping ruffles, slightly saggy silhouettes—bespeaks a century of parlor-sitting. In fact, they are also newly minted, ready to be custom ordered in etiolated fabrics with names like "serenity cream fern" or the company's popular all-white upholstery, which recalls the sheets that used to cover furniture in domiciles closed off for the summer. The shop, a vast expanse with a concrete floor and striped balloon shades on its glass doors, also carries vintage furnishings, including a white wicker desk and chair (the inkwell is still extant) from a time when penny postcards were as routine as E-mails ($425).

The rough wood sign outside Laura Fisher's shop looks a little incongruous in the slick subbasement of the **MANHATTAN ART AND ANTIQUES CENTER** (Gallery 84, 1050 Second Ave.; 838-2596), but it certainly matches the goods within. "I like things that are made of pieces, things that have been made from something else—blanket and suiting for quilts, rag strips for rugs," says Fisher, who has spent almost two decades building a staggering collection of quilts, hooked rugs, Indian blankets, and other examples of American folk art from the turn of the eighteenth century to the dawn of the Second World War. "It's a testament to creation," she says of a four-foot-high lamp covered with Dixie Cup spoons (longer Popsicle sticks adorn the foot-high base) ($485). The selection of coverlets would make even the most assiduous flea-market searchers throw up their hands in defeat. There are so many that they're organized by genre—paisleys, white work, Amish blankets—rather than by size. A crazy quilt made of elaborately arranged patches that have been enhanced with signatures, verses, and flora is so fragile that it is sold in a Plexiglas case ($4,500), though at least one of its messages, embroidered in sky blue—"Whatever thy dreams beneath this quilt may blessings still be thine"—is as vivid today as it must have been in 1885.

—*Lynn Yaeger*

Short List

WAYNE GONZALES
Paula Cooper, 521 W. 21st St. 255-1105.
Through May 26.
TONY OURSLER
Metro Pictures, 519 W. 24th St. 206-7100.
Through June 16.
CHRISTOPHER WOOL
Luhring Augustine, 531 W. 24th St.
206-9100. Through June 16.

GALLERIES–DOWNTOWN

RAOUL DE KEYSER
This Belgian painter, now in his eighth decade, paints modest, sotto-voce abstractions: a few pools or freehand dashes, a constellation of paper-clip shapes. They're the kind of thing one associates with a tired, endgame view of painting, but a few blaze up with arresting delicacy. In one especially fine picture, eleven green pebbly shapes lie scattered, not quite haphazardly, around a field of salmon pink. At the top edge a single reddish ellipse, like a squashed sun, gives the arrangement the tiniest nudge toward representation. Through June 16. (Zwirner, 43 Greene St. 966-9074.)

HIRO YAMAGATA
Spectacle is this Japanese technophile's specialty, and "NGC6093," his first installation in New York, delivers. Yamagata and a busload of technicians have panelled the gallery's seven rooms in refractive Mylar, hung hundreds of rotating mirrored cubes from the ceiling, and installed computer-programmed lasers and searchlights. The result leaves viewers feeling as happily stupefied as a muon in a particle accelerator. Not everyone will agree that it qualifies as art ("disco décor" also springs to mind), but Yamagata's work is a numbing delight. Through July 28. (Ace, 275 Hudson St. 255-5599.)

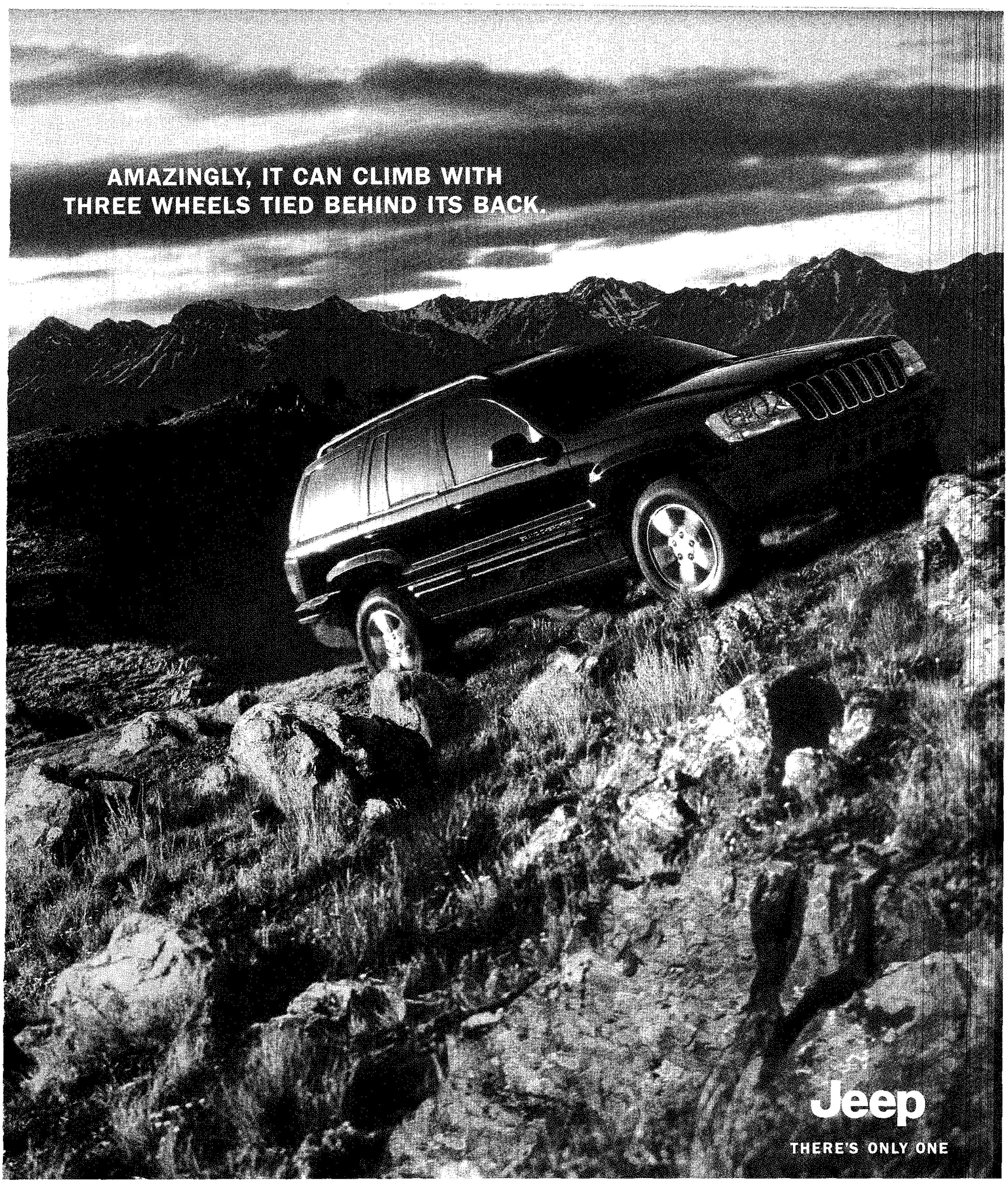
Short List

BRAD KAHLHAMER
Deitch Projects, 76 Grand St. 343-7300.
Through June 30.
JEFFREY VALLANCE
Lehmann Maupin, 39 Greene St. 965-0753.
Through June 16.

GALLERIES–BROOKLYN

RYAN MCGINNESS
"Vocabularytest" opens, cheerfully, with a table of freebies, such as stickers proclaiming "I [heart] my social skills" and "A lot of art is boring." His matchbooks covered in "art haiku" take on the big boys: "Julian Schnabel / Sometimes I just don't get it. / Man, he sure is rich!" Inside, the enamelled icons and stickered skateboard designs give away McGinness's graphic-arts background and his youth. In other works, that combination is directed toward more sophisticated goals—the videos on constant replay, "Hour of Power" and "Tickle," show studious tests of the human capacity for drink and touch, respectively. "Dandruff" shows what appear to be distant stars (in fact, it's a scan of the title material) and then blurs them, suggesting both sudden aging and interstellar acceleration. Through June 17. (Sylvestro, 122 N. 11th St. 718-782-9830.)

"ARCHIPOD"
The smart-alecky architectural and landscape images and models here are pleasant enough, but having a home designed for you, by "Apartment," an interactive software program designed by Marek Walczak and Martin Wattenberg, is a cure for drywall. Key in a sentence and see what comes up: "I like to eat" yields a dining room marked "eat" and a bedroom with the word "I" bouncing around it. Tacking on "and cook" adds a kitchen. More complicated constructions yield more elegant structures—the opening couplet of Elizabeth Bishop's "Casabianca" plots a rambling old place with a big kitchen, where "burning" bumps from wall to wall,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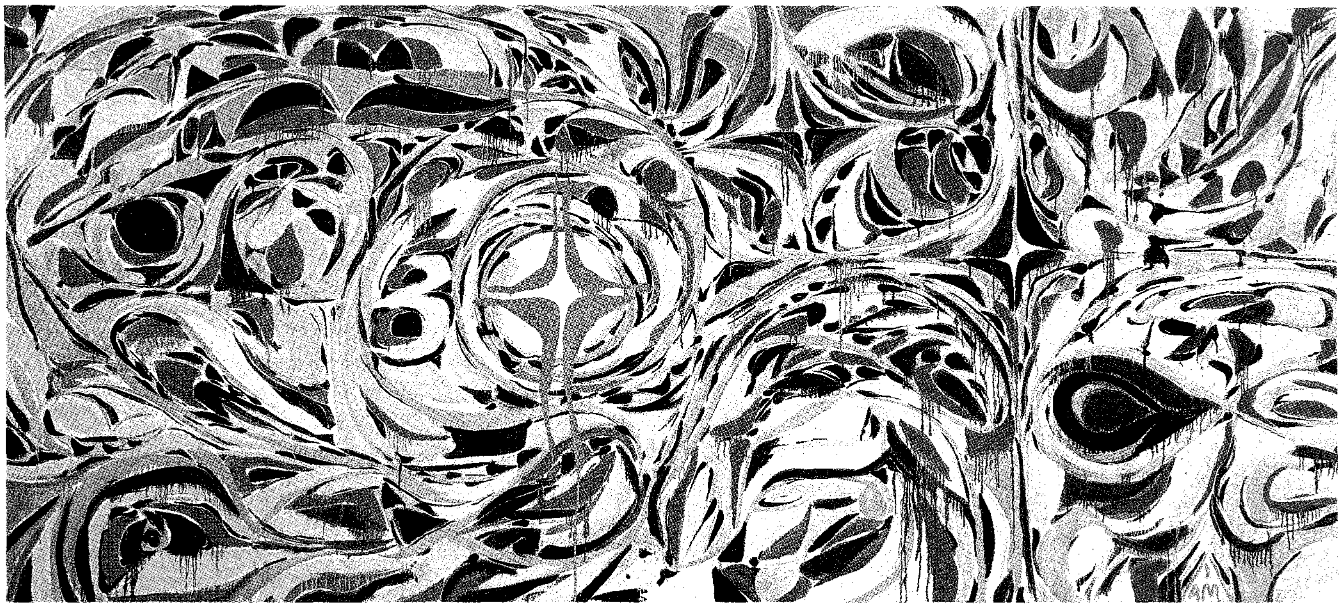
and a big bedroom, housing "love" and "boy." Through May 27. (Star 67, at 67 Metropolitan Ave. 718-486-0387.)

"DEAR DEAD PERSON"
This morbidly amusing show takes its name from an epistolary short story, composed of letters from a rubbernecker to a car-crash victim. All the deaths here are kept at arm's length, with the works digesting news (Columbine, Heaven's Gate) and everyday horror (child abuse, auto fatalities). But it's Roe Ethridge's bird's-eye photograph of an ambulance crash at Fourteenth Street and Sixth Avenue which touches down again, in jarringly familiar territory—just one L-train stop from the gallery. Through June 4. (Momenta, 72 Berry St. 718-218-8058.)



"I Am (Intertribal)," by Richmond Burton, at Cheim & Read (see Galleries—Chelsea).

AUCTIONS & ANTIQUES

SOTHEBY'S
May 23 at 10:15 A.M. and 2: More than four hundred lots of furniture, carpets, paintings, sculpture, silver, and decorative objects from La Fiorentina, the Cap Ferrat villa decorated by Lady Kenmare and her son Roderick Cameron after the Second World War and redone in the nineteen-seventies by the legendary American designer Billy Baldwin. Included are a Louis XVI ormolu-mounted mahogany *console desserte*, a generous selection of Picasso ceramics, and Severin Roesen's painting "Grapes on a Marble Slab." ♦ May 23 at 10:15 A.M.: An impressive offering of Old Master paintings, including work by Starnina, Tiepolo ("Christ and the Adulteress," from 1752), Reni, Greuze, and Abraham Mignon. ♦ May 24 at 10:15 A.M. and 2: Two superb canvases by John Singer Sargent ("Rosina—Capri" and "Girl Fishing at San Vigilio") are the highlights of a sale of American paintings, drawings, and sculpture which also features work by such artists as Henri, Burchfield, Lawrence, and Lachaise. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

CHRISTIE'S
May 23 at 10:15 A.M. and 2: American paintings. ♦ May 24 at 10 A.M. and 2: French and other Continental furniture, carpets, and porcelain. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 636-2000.)

CHRISTIE'S EAST
May 23 at 10:30 A.M. and 2: European furniture, carpets, ceramics, glass, and works of art. (219 E. 67th St. 660-0400.)

SWANN
May 24 at 10:30 A.M.: The medical library of the Brooklyn cardiologist Norman Shaftel (1914-98). While many items might be of interest only to the medically inclined, some have exceptional historical value, while others (like Eduard Sandifort's "Observationes Anatomico-Pathologicae," from 1777-81) contain exquisite illustrations. (104 E. 25th St. 254-4710.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

TRACEY BARAN
This New York photographer's third show includes a nude (it's the artist, with a bad case of poison ivy), some decomposing livestock (heaped matter-of-factly next to discarded slabs of concrete), and a fat guy moping in his bath. Beautiful, crisp color and an almost sultry Southern-gothic tone draw her disparate subjects together, so that the sweating cocktail glass on a windowsill works perfectly well opposite a closeup of a fresh, fur-fringed carcass. Through June 9. (Liebman Magnan, 552 W. 24th St. 255-3225.)

DOUG HALL
Hall's large-format color photographs of Asia are almost always shot from some height; they take in acres of water or the crowns of their subjects' heads. Shots of Vietnamese wetlands and the breathtaking "Tokyo Bay" diptych (an industrial waterfront framed by the arc of a flyaway highway ramp) use this godlike perspective to fit in as much picturesque landscape as possible; other images crowd more pedestrians, moped riders, rickshaw proprietors, and swimmers into the composition. Through June 2. (Feigen, 535 W. 20th St. 929-0500.)

WILLIAM KLEIN
In 1954, the painter, photographer, and filmmaker returned from Paris to his native New York, a homecoming that led to the book "Life Is Good and Good for You in New York: Trance Witness Revels." Though he was photographing in the streets at the same time that Robert Frank was working on "The Americans," Klein's approach was a more gregarious, full-frontal assault. These large vintage prints are ripe with the faces of kids and swells, mugging and unself-conscious, filling the picture plane. Klein uses slow shutter speeds and creates grainy effects, rendering his subjects in energetic, graphic black-and-white compositions. His New York series is followed by similar treatments of Rome (1956), Moscow (1961), and Tokyo (1962). Through June 9. (Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. 334-0010.)

"INHABITING"
Three artists look at architecture and the use of space, but only one, Rochelle Costi, seems to have shot recognizable places. It can be difficult to follow the stories behind her paired interior scenes, which record Brazilian apartments before and after changes in the inhabitants' circumstances (with titles like "A Little Better Off" and "Some Remodeling"), but her extra-large photos make beautiful documents out of intimate squalor, gaudy ritual, and domestic desperation. Through June 16. (Galerie Lelong, 20 W. 57th St. 315-0470.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY
Kiki Smith's "Telling Tales" parses fairy stories and childhood myths via photography, sculpture, and video. Hans Bellmer's oddly assembled dolls and a collection of Victorian daguerreotype portraits of male friends—some of whom look to modern eyes like couples—are also on show. All shows at the Center's Midtown space through June 10. ♦ A survey of Mary Ellen Mark's work will be the last exhibit to appear in the Uptown galleries, which close with the show on June 16. (Uptown: 1130 Fifth Ave., at 93rd St. Midtown: 1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. 860-1777. Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10-5; Fridays, 10-8; Saturdays and Sundays, 10-6.)

Short List

BERND AND HILLA BECHER
Zwirner & Wirth, 32 E. 69th St. 517-8677.
Through May 25.

JAMES CASEBERE
Kelly, 528 W. 29th St. 239-1181.
Through June 16.

SEIICHI FURUYA
Scalo, 560 Broadway. 334-9393.
Through June 9.

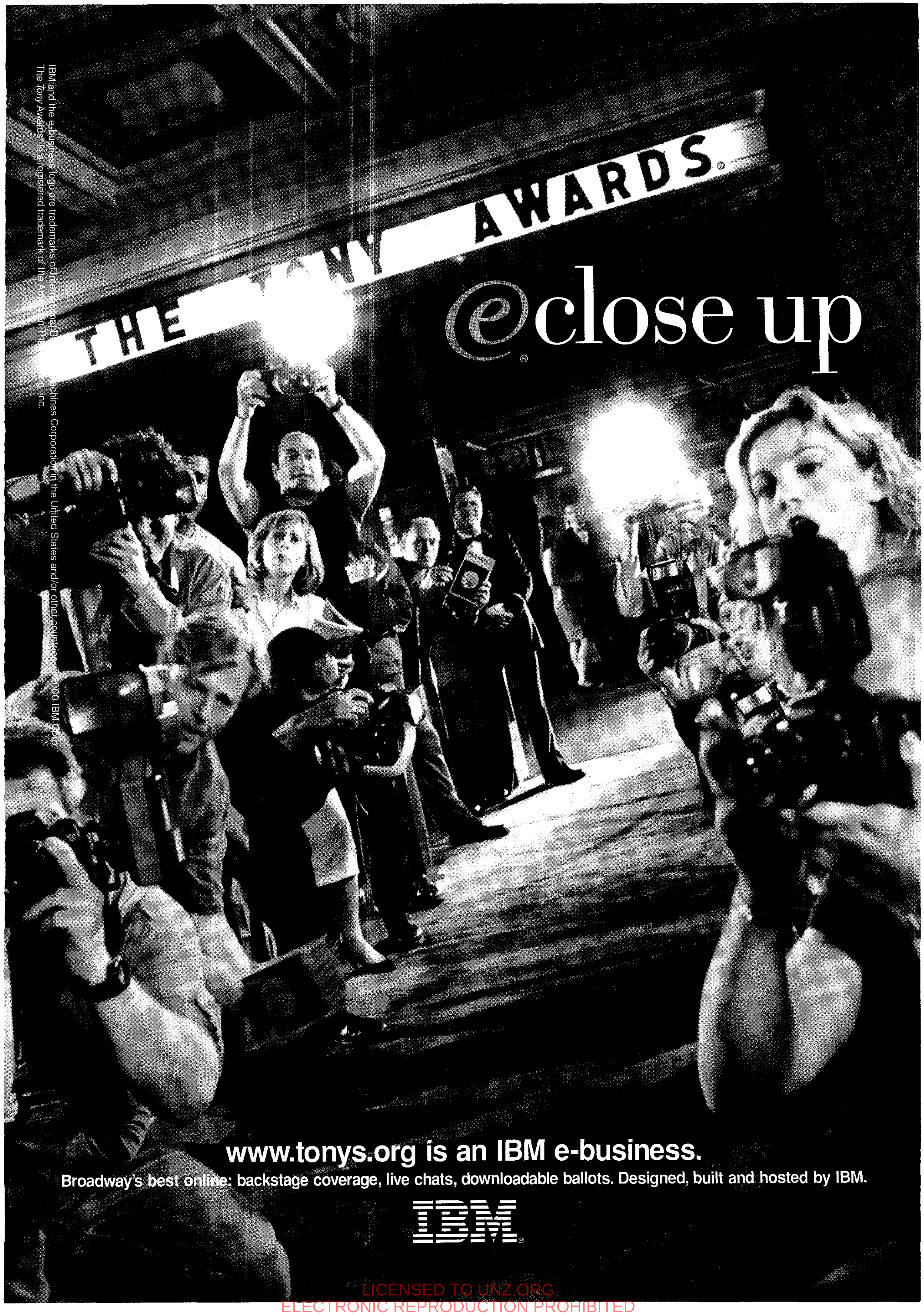
WILLIAM KLEIN
Cowles, 537 W. 24th St. 925-3500.
Through May 26.

ROGER NEWTON
Roth Horowitz, 160A E. 70th St. 717-9067.
Through June 23.

ANNU PALAKUNNATHU MATTHEW / KETAKI SHETH / PAMELA SINGH
Sepia, 148 W. 28th St. 645-9444.
Through June 16.

CLASSICAL MUSIC OPERA

AMATO OPERA
"Falstaff," the final opera of Verdi's glorious career, may not be a chamber opera per se, yet its nimble incorporation of elements from Shakespeare's "Merry Wives of Windsor" and from



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"Henry IV" (by the composer-littérateur Arrigo Boito), along with the heightened verbal play that comedy naturally allows, has inspired a number of intimate productions. In Amato's final presentation of the season, the little company's artistic director, Anthony Amato, has created a version designed to bring out the "hidden" arias, duets, and ensembles in the work's quasi-Wagnerian musical fabric by leaving them in the original Italian, with the rest of the opera's text sung in English. (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery. 228-8200. May 26 at 7:30 and May 27 at 2:30. Through June 17.)

NEW YORK FESTIVAL OF SONG
Before the Broadway musical came along, there was operetta, a late-nineteenth-century genre that simplified the dramatic lines of traditional opera, lightened the plots, and allowed for abundant spoken dialogue. In "An Operetta Junket," the festival presents music by some of the European masters of the form (such as Offenbach, Kálmán, Chabrier, and Sullivan) along with songs by Kern, Gershwin, and Sousa, the American composers who transformed that music into something wonderfully new. The singers are Jane Jennings, Leslie Johnson, Theodore Green, Ian Greenlaw, and Philip Cutlip; Steven Blier is the pianist; Michael Barrett directs the N.Y.F.O.S. Chorus. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. May 23 at 8.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
In honor of Bruno Walter, the German-American maestro who conducted the Philharmonic more than four hundred times between 1923 and 1960, Kurt Masur conducts a program of Schumann (the "Concertstück," for four horns and orchestra) and Bruckner (Symphony No. 4, the "Romantic"). Masur's authority in the traditional German repertory is impressive, but Walter's lifelong championship of new music—including scores by Barber, Hindemith, Pfitzner, and Douglas Moore—is something the orchestra has, unfortunately, chosen to ignore. (Avery Fisher Hall. 721-6500. May 24 and May 26 at 8 and May 25 at 11 A.M.) ♦ Masur repeats the Bruckner in the Philharmonic's tenth annual Memorial Day concert at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, along with Sofia Gubaidulina's "Two Paths" (1999), a concerto for two violas and orchestra (with principal and associate principal violists Cynthia Phelps and Rebecca Young). (Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. May 28 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

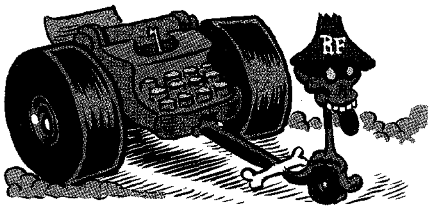
JUILLIARD ORCHESTRA
Sergiu Comissiona leads the ensemble in an ebullient program of Tchaikovsky (the fantasy-overture "Romeo and Juliet"), Strauss (the First Horn Concerto, with Carolyn Landis), and Dvořák (the Eighth Symphony). (Alice Tully Hall. 769-7406. May 24 at 8.)

BRONX ARTS ENSEMBLE ORCHESTRA
Michael J. Buglio conducts a program of light music by Bernstein, Gershwin, John Williams, and others. (Van Cortlandt Park, near Broadway at West 246th St., the Bronx. May 27 at 2. No tickets necessary; call 718-601-7399 for information.)

GOLDMAN MEMORIAL BAND
Outdoor military-band music was once a mainstay of American life during summer, until the convenience of recorded pop music essentially made it obsolete. The Goldman Memorial Band—the third-oldest professional-music organization in the city, after the Philharmonic and the Metropolitan Opera—has continued the tradition in fine style, and is offering its third annual Memorial Day concert of classics (including pieces by Rossini, Sousa, and Bernstein) and festive newer works in the pleasant setting of Brooklyn's Green-Wood Cemetery, where many of America's greatest artists, musicians, and statesmen are buried. (Fifth Ave. at 25th St., Brooklyn. May 28 at 1:30. No tickets necessary.)

BOOK CURRENTS

Hot-Rod Hearts

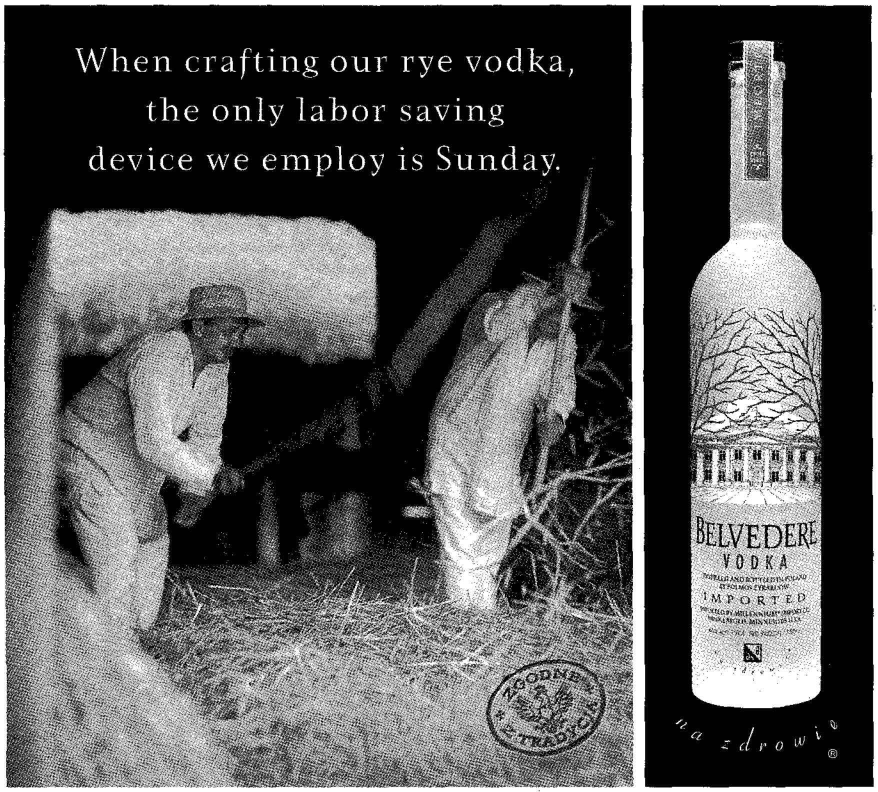


The recent death of Ed (Big Daddy) Roth—hot-rod honcho in the fifties and sixties, creator of such fanciful vehicles as the Beatnik Bandit, and the artist behind Rat Fink, the drooly, fly-infested mascot of all things hot rod—comes at a time when hot-rod culture is undergoing a serious revival. **CUSTOMIZED: ART INSPIRED BY HOT RODS, LOW RIDERS AND AMERICAN CAR CULTURE** (Abrams/ICA), edited by Nora Donnelly and designed to accompany an exhibition at Boston's Institute of Contemporary Art, is full of illuminating essays, including Dale Peck's ode to his father's souped-up '31 Chevy sedan, "a monument to wasted money, a display of wealth the wealthy find tacky." The art work featured in "Customized" is proudly lowbrow, often referring directly back to Big Daddy: the comics-inspired "Blue Collar Bravado Born of a Torque Wrench" turns out to be painted by Robert Williams, once the art director of Roth's T-shirt and model-kit empire, and the artist known only as Coop offers, in "Popemobile," a gleefully adolescent vision of Rat Fink as Jesus.

Ken Steacy's **BRIGHTWORK** (Chronicle) argues that vintage hood ornaments are undervalued art objects. The golden age of these chrome goddesses, sprinting canines, and phallic spacecraft ended just around the time that Ford unveiled its factory version of a custom muscle car, the Mustang, in 1964. The pages of **KUSTOM** (Greybull/D.A.P.), a collection of photographs by Dewey Nicks, have a candy-apple gloss that would have made Big Daddy proud. Nicks's images of tricked-out cars and tricked-out people—from silicone-enhanced babes to Wynonna Judd on her wedding day—suggest that the hot-rod aesthetic has racked up more mileage than Big Daddy ever envisioned.

—Mark Rozzo

GARY LIEB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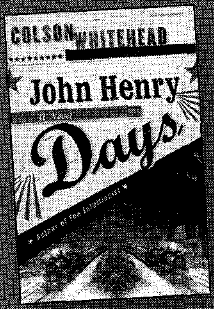

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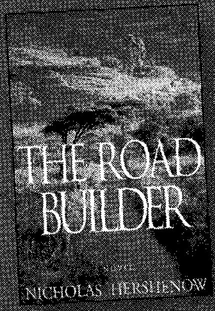

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A young American couple journeys to Africa to uncover the shadowy past of a dying relative who may be the region's infamous Road Builder. Ultimately they embark on an odyssey into local culture, myth and belief.

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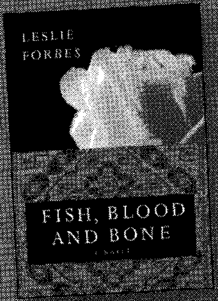

BOTANY

A forensic photographer with a passion for botany inherits a large house and garden from relatives she didn't know she had. She soon unearths plenty of family secrets in a complex thriller that spans two continents and two centuries.

FISH, BLOOD AND BONE
by Leslie Forbes
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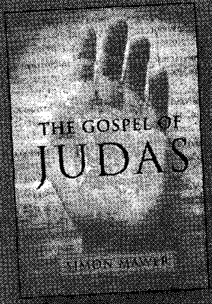

BETRAYAL

An American priest is called to the Vatican to decipher the meaning of a newly discovered scroll appearing to be the Gospel according to Judas. He confronts the impact of this explosive document in light of his own crises of faith.

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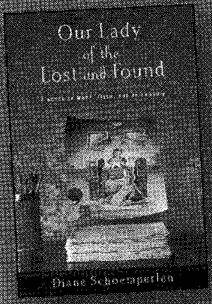

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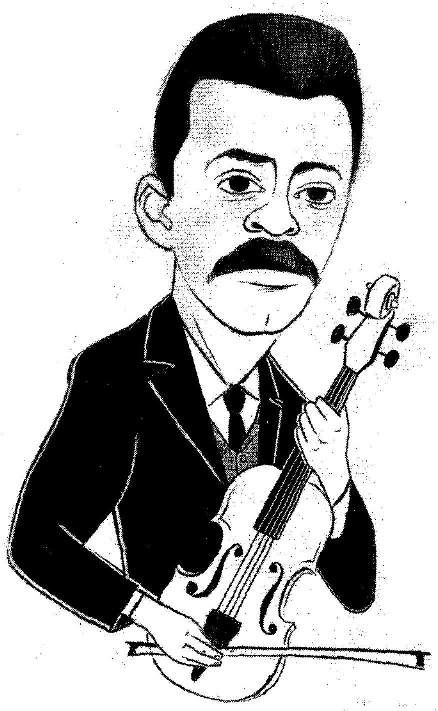
RECITALS

"BROTHER"
A staged song cycle, created by the composer-pianist David Del Tredici and the singer and theatre artist John Kelly, that examines love's extremes, using texts by Allen Ginsberg, Paul Monette, Lewis Carroll (who inspired Del Tredici's "Alice" pieces of the nineteen-seventies and eighties), Jamie Manrique, and Kelly. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. May 23 and May 25-26 at 8:30 and May 24 at 8:30 and 10.)

COMPOSERS CONCORDANCE
Music by a varied group of contemporary composers, including Harrison Birtwistle, Ursula Mamlok, Steven Burke ("Spelling Venus"), and Gordon Beeferman ("Sonata Bombastica," for violin and piano). The musicians include the flutist Margaret Lancaster and the percussionist Matthew Gold. (Frederick Loewe Theatre, New York University, 35 W. 4th St. 564-4899. May 24 at 8.)

"REICH REDUX"
Miller Theatre closes its season with the same composer with whom it began: Steve Reich, whose music of the last thirty-five years has provided a more intellectually rigorous and deeply spiritual alternative to that of his fellow-minimalists Philip Glass and John Adams. Ossia, a new group out of the Eastman School of Music, performs two of the composer's most substantial works: "Tehillim" (1981), mystical and ebullient settings of Hebrew psalms, and its darker successor "The Desert Music" (1982-84), based on poems by William Carlos Williams, in a new ensemble version made especially for this concert. (Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. May 24 at 8.)

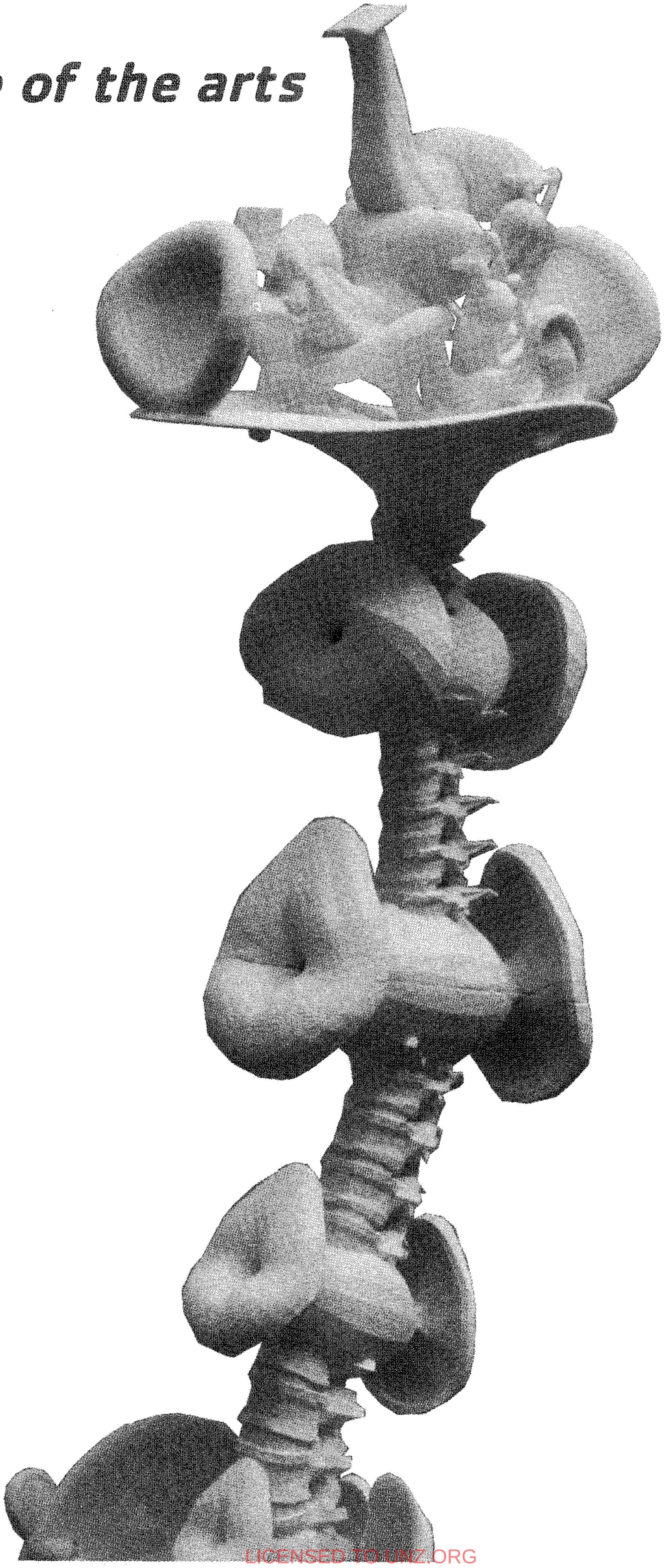


Bargemusic celebrates the music and artistry of Fritz Kreisler, May 24-27.

EDEL RODRIGUEZ

EBERLI ENSEMBLE
Since 1982, the Atlantic Center for the Arts, in New Smyrna Beach, Florida, has sponsored collaborative residencies in which master artists supervise the creation of new works by younger colleagues. The Eberli Ensemble—violin, cello, clarinet, and piano—and the composer Aaron Jay Kernis convened there in June of 2000 to meet with the young composers Robert Paterson, Stacy Garrop, and David Mallamud, whose spicy and eclectic works will be featured at a kind of alumni-week concert at Roulette. Kernis—whose crafty combination of

state of the arts



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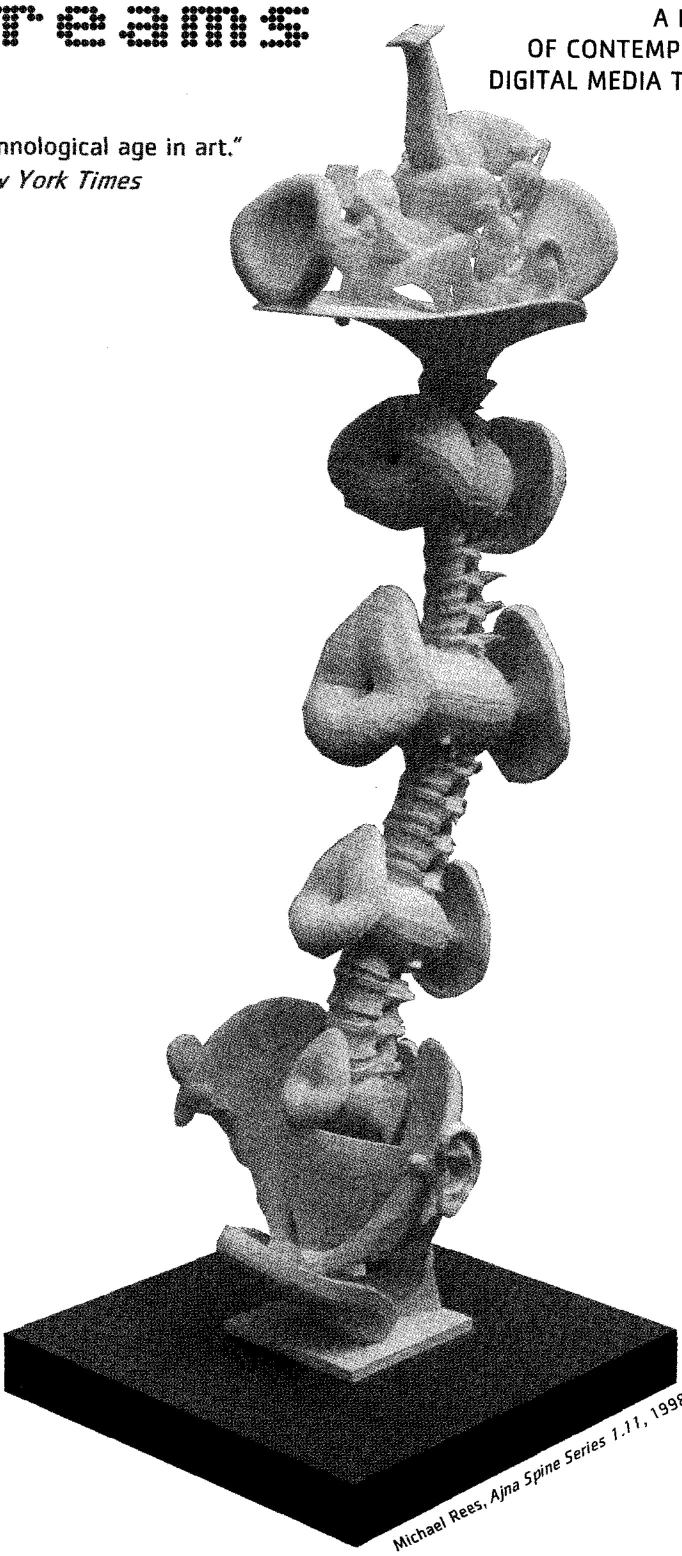

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minimalism, pop, modernist rigor, and appealing lyricism has provided a worthy model for his young colleagues—is also represented, with a new arrangement of his "Still Movement with Hymn" (1992). (228 West Broadway. For information about tickets, call 219-8242. May 24 at 8.)

BARGEMUSIC
Fritz Kreisler (1875-1962) enjoyed a special place in classical music both as an effortlessly virtuosic violinist (he rarely practiced) and as a composer of scintillating miniatures for the instrument. In the first of two weeks of concerts coördinated by the violist Paul Neubauer, the floating chamber-music series pays homage to his memory. May 24-25 at 8: Music by Mozart and Beethoven (the Serenade for Flute, Violin, and Viola, Op. 25), featuring the flutist Marina Piccinini, along with Kreisler's rarely performed String Quartet in A Minor. ♦ May 26 at 7:30 and May 27 at 4: A number of shorter works by Kreisler (including the "Berceuse Romantique" and "Aucassin and Nicolette"), along with music by Haydn, Mozart, and Dvořák (the "Dumky" Trio). (Fulton Ferry Landing. 718-624-2083.)

SUNDAYS ON THE ISLAND
Music by Mozart (the rustic, ingratiating "Kegelstadt" Trio) and Bruch, performed by the clarinettist Jo-Ann Sternberg, the violist Liuh Wen Ting, and the pianist Innesa Zaretsky, at Le Refuge, a charming country inn at the edge of the city. (620 City Island Ave., the Bronx. 718-885-2478. May 27 at 12:30.)

FREDERIC CHIU
The playing of this young American pianist is a persuasive combination of tonal warmth and intellectual control, attributes ideally suited to his program of Liszt (Book II of "Années de Pèlerinage") and Chopin (the Études, Op. 10). (ProPiano Hall, 85 Jane Street. 206-8794. May 27 at 4.)

ISAAC STERN CHAMBER-MUSIC WORKSHOP
The legendary violinist leads his fifth professional training workshop for outstanding young ensembles from around the world. While the final public concert is on June 9, audiences are welcome to hear six of the initial training sessions, beginning on May 29. The participants include the Delancey Quartet, the Fry Street Quartet, and the Trio Polskie, who will be coached by a staff that includes David Finckel, Michael Tree, Wu Han, and Stern, whose generous but exacting style of pedagogy will doubtless rule the proceedings. (Weill Recital Hall and Kaplan Space, Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Sessions will be held in both spaces at 9:30 A.M. and 2.)

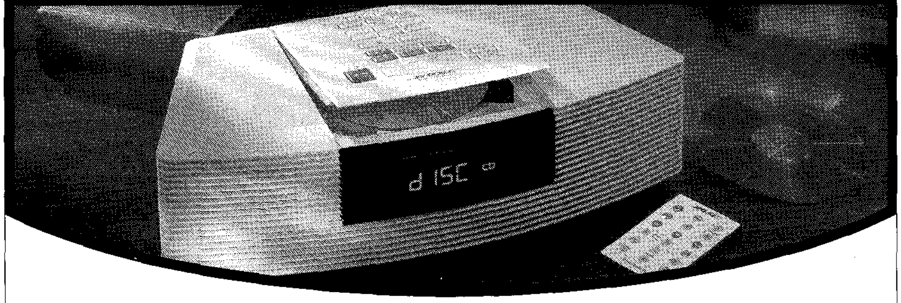
ABOVE AND BEYOND

READINGS

May 23 at 7: By Colm Toibin, from his novel, "The Blackwater Lightship," and by John Wray, from his novel, "The Right Hand of Sleep." (Housing Works Used Book Café, 126 Crosby St. 334-3324.) ♦ May 23 at 8: By the actors Jacqueline Kim, Ruben Santiago-Hudson, and Mary Beth Hurt, from the short stories of Sandra Cisneros, Luc Sante, and Flannery O'Connor. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400.) ♦ May 24 at 7:30: By the poet Hal Sirowitz. (Pete's Candy Store, 709 Lorimer St., Brooklyn. 718-302-3770.) ♦ May 29 at 7: By Adriana Trigiani, from her novel "Big Cherry Holler." (Three Lives & Company, 154 W. 10th St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ May 29 at 8: By the poet Seamus Heaney, who will be joined by the Irish piper Liam O'Flynn. (Alice Tully Hall. 721-6500.)

TALKS

May 23 at 6: Bernhard Schlink, a professor of law at Humboldt Universtity, in Berlin, and the author of the novel "The Reader," discusses Rousseau and utopian communities in America. (Margaret Liebman Berger Forum, New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. For more information, call 930-0084.) ♦ May 24 at 7:30: David Hajdu, the author of "Positively 4th Street: The Lives and Times of Joan Baez, Bob Dylan, Mimi Baez Fariña, and Richard Fariña," joins the former proprietor of the Village Gate Art D'Lugoff and the folksinger Dave Van Ronk for a conversation about Bob Dylan on his sixtieth birthday. (Barnes & Noble, 33 E. 17th St. No tickets necessary.)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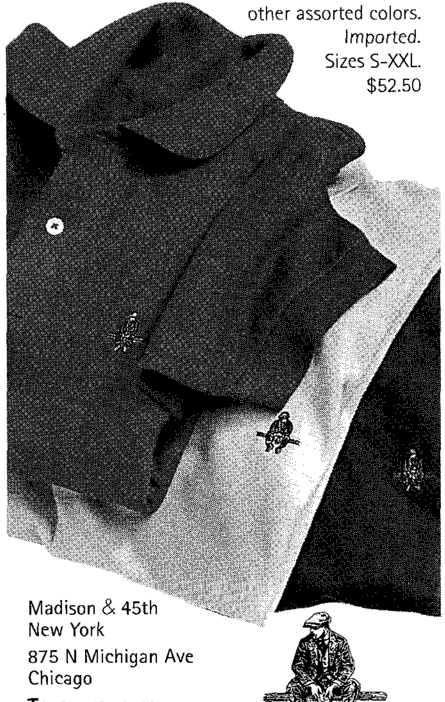
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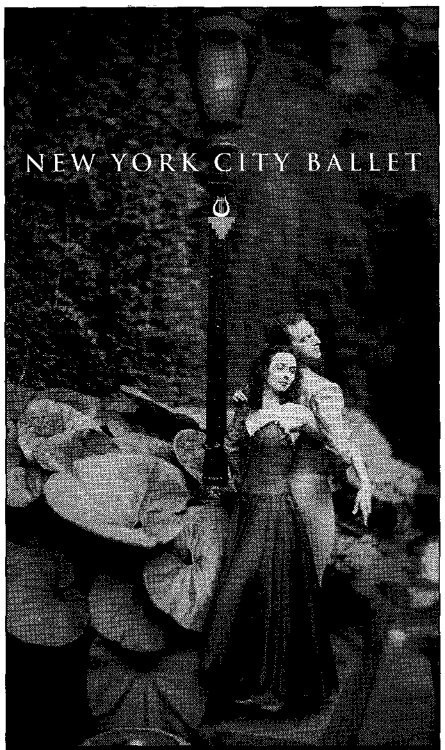
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Jenifer Ringer and James Fayette, photographed by ©Raymond Meeks in Central Park.

MOVIES OPENING

THE MAN WHO CRIED

A romantic drama set during the outbreak of the Second World War, written and directed by Sally Potter. With Christina Ricci, Johnny Depp, Cate Blanchett, and John Turturro. Opening May 25.

OUR SONG

A film that follows the lives of three teen-age girls in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, during the final weeks of summer. Directed by Jim McKay. Opening May 23. (Film Forum.)

PEARL HARBOR

Michael Bay directed this epic war drama, which sets a love triangle amid the events of December 7, 1941. With Kate Beckinsale, Ben Affleck, and Josh Hartnett. Opening May 25.

THE ROAD HOME

The latest film from Zhang Yimou, the story of a businessman who returns to his native village after his father dies. With Zhang Ziyi. In Mandarin. Opening May 25.

FILM NOTES

AMORES PERROS

The début directorial effort of Alejandro González Iñárritu gives you a pretty good idea of what life is like in Mexico City and an enduring wish never to drive its streets at rush hour. The first section chronicles the near-incestuous affair between Octavio (Gael García Bernal) and his sister-in-law Susana (Vanessa Bauche). The second, which sags with weary symbolism, is about a model who loses a leg. The third and strongest tells of an ex-terrorist and tramp (Emilio Echevarría). The connective tissue between these folks is a car crash, and each of them also either owns or trains dogs. Iñárritu's style may be heated and hectic, but he doesn't bully you into judging these frazzled figures, and, in Echevarría, he has found a figure of great and grimy nobility. In Spanish.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 4/2/01.) (Empire 25, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Union Square.)

BLOW

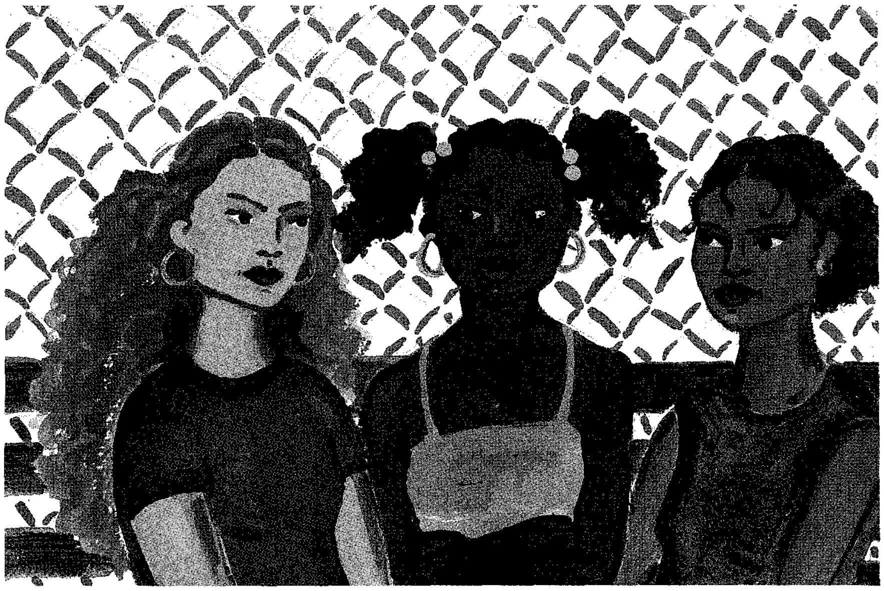
The story of George Jung, a Massachusetts man who sold the Medellín cartel's cocaine to mainstream America in the seventies, would seem to offer a perfect star vehicle for Johnny Depp, but the unconvincing narrative doesn't allow him to shape a performance. The scenes are flimsily staged—thin and underdone. Now and then the director, Ted Demme, resorts to a rapid montage of shots meant to convey the giddy drug life, but this isn't directing; it's more like flinging a loosely pasted scrapbook onto the floor and asking the audience to sort it out.—*David Denby* (4/9/01) (Battery Park 16, Empire 25, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, Sutton 1 and 2, and Village Theatre VII.)

BRIDGET JONES'S DIARY

Helen Fielding's creation has finally arrived onscreen; in place of her wiry, worried tone we now find an almost confident pleasure in mishaps and manhunting. The director, Sharon Maguire, has shaped the fretful original into a basic romantic comedy, leaving an aching Bridget (Renée Zellweger) with a choice of nice Mr. Darcy (Colin Firth) or dastardly Daniel Cleaver (Hugh Grant). These three leads are much better than the movie they front; some of the secondary characters are dangerously thin, although Jim Broadbent is as crumpled and reliable as ever in the role of our heroine's dad. Bridget mania, meanwhile, shows no signs of abating, but one hopes that this film might herald the end of the affair; after all, self-pity has its limitations as the engine of drama, and the idea that a young woman might be not just unhappy but somehow incomplete without a man would have struck even Jane Austen as laughably passé.—*A.L.* (4/16/01) (Battery Park 16, Cinema II, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Olympia I and II, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE CENTER OF THE WORLD

Explicit, eyeglass-fogging sexual games from the director Wayne Wang. A nerdy, rich Silicon Valley computer engineer, Richard (Peter Sarsgaard), pays a beautiful freckle-faced stripper, Florence (Molly Parker), to accompany him to Las Vegas for a three-day weekend. Richard is paying, but he wants feeling and emotion; Florence wants nothing but control. The movie, shot with a hand-held digital camera, has a dreamy surface and the aura of a reverie, but there's also a bit of suspense floating in the erotic cloud: Will Richard get Florence to respond to him? A friend of Florence's named Jerri (Carla Gugino), her opposite in every way, threatens to take the movie to a dangerous place, but she storms off, leaving the two inarticulate principals to mop up.—*D.D.* (4/23 & 30/01) (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, Eastside Playhouse, Empire 25, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and 62nd & Broadway.)



Opening May 23, Jim McKay's "Our Song."

ELIZA GRAN

CHOPPER

The tale of a brute and a braggart, all the more daunting for being drawn from life; Mark Brandon Read (Eric Bana), lovingly known as Chopper, was one of the most outlandishly violent—and certainly most famous—prisoners in Australia's jails. Andrew Dominik's movie tracks him from the late nineteen-seventies to the early nineties, watching him make and remake enemies while cleaving ominously to old friends. The film steps up to its neck in blood, yet it's hardly your standard exploitation flick. Chopper may be exploiting the prison system, and the media have fun exploiting his legend, but there is also a strain of comic independence in the man, and the picture ends up as a thoroughly Australian, if discordant, hymn to the peculiar virtues of mateship.—*A.L.* (4/16/01) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, and Village East Cinemas.)

THE CIRCLE

Anonymous women on the streets of Teheran crouch alongside cars to avoid police, dart down alleys, and flee from dangerous places with black chadors held over their heads, as if flying under dark wings. At first we may be puzzled by the frenetic rushing about, but after a while we realize that this is exactly the point. These women have either spent time in prison or are heading straight there, and they are looking for a place to hide in a society in which single women have no more than provisional legitimacy as citizens. The director, Jafar Panahi, offers echoes of the Italian neorealist cinema in the general forlornness and pained humanism of his approach, but he's created aesthetic strategies all his own. Despite a longueur here and there, the cumulative power of "The Circle" is extraordinary. In Farsi.—*D.D.* (4/23 & 30/01) (Cinema Village and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

DRIVEN

Bring earplugs. Renny Harlin and Sylvester Stallone, the team who gave us the vertical thrills of "Cliffhanger," try to go horizontal with a car-racing movie. It's not a bad popcorn flick as long as Sly and the gang stay in their cars, but when they emerge it gets ugly.—*Michael Agger (*Battery Park 16, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, New York Twin, Orpheum VII, and Union Square.)

THE GODS OF TIMES SQUARE

Watching Richard Sandler's documentary is like discovering a box of old photographs. Here are the sidewalk preachers, pleasure seekers, and urban malcontents that populated Times Square before it was cleaned up, when the theatres showed films with titles like "Horny Frat Girls." Sandler is an accomplished street photographer, and his practiced eye does much with limited means; he builds atmosphere by framing his subjects against the oversized fashion ads and news zippers. He accumulates impressions, theologies, and rants, and presents them virtually without narration; the result is a tone poem of the righteous and the possessed. Some characters are vanishing originals, like James, a bearded cleric who answers every question with one of his own, and Jim, a sallow Englishman who reveals himself to be Jesus Christ and adds that "starting in 1994, he's going to do rock music, marry Madonna," and then "get into international affairs."—*M.A.* (Anthology Film Archives; May 23.)

THE GOLDEN BOWL

Henry James made easy—no small task, given the complications of the plot. Prince Amerigo (Jeremy Northam) marries Maggie Verver (Kate Beckinsale), whose father, Adam Verver (Nick Nolte), then marries Maggie's friend Charlotte Stant (Uma Thurman). No one has a clue what anyone else is up to, let alone what happened before the marriage craze set in. In the book, such innocence seems like one of the infinite velleities of its atmosphere; onscreen, you have half a mind to slap the characters awake. This is a Merchant-Ivory production, so it looks as luscious as ever, though the actors display an unaccustomed shudder of neurosis; the honorable exception is Nick Nolte, who gives a growling depth to his depiction of the self-made

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man. Not much happens, although it is cunningly camouflaged as excess; why have a boring party, the film suggests, when you can make it a costume party and have people wear suits of armor?—*A.L.* (5/7/01) (BAM Rose Cinemas and Paris.)

A KNIGHT'S TALE

There's some great medieval action in Brian Hegeland's second film—essentially the story of a commoner (Heath Ledger) who competes for the love of a lady (Shannyn Sossamon). Ledger has the golden-boy good looks that make it easy to cheer him on, and the film is given a modern gloss with an insistent rock-anthem score. But hokey dialogue and uninspired situations weigh everything down. It's fun enough, but only joust.—*Bruce Diones* (Battery Park 16, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Village Theatre VII.)

A LONG NIGHT'S JOURNEY INTO DAY

Discussing his role in an undercover operation that led to the deaths of seven boys, Thapelo Mbelo, a black South African policeman, tells the camera, "We didn't have feelings. It felt just like a day's work had been done." His story is one of four recounted in Frances Reid and Deborah Hoffmann's searing documentary about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The filmmakers don't flinch at presenting the audience with direct evidence of evil; some of the footage is shockingly graphic. The stories told by both the victims and the killers are equally raw, and the hearings become moral theatre, raising difficult questions about bigotry and forgiveness.—*M.A.* (BAM Rose Cinemas; May 23-27.)

THE LUZHIN DEFENCE

After the stream-of-consciousness rigors of Virginia Woolf's "Mrs. Dalloway," the director Marleen Gorris tackles the endgames and head games of Vladimir Nabokov's chess novel. John Turturro plays the titular Russian prodigy, and he gives his emotionally catatonic character a slouchy, innocent physical charm. As the countess who loves Luzhin, Emily Watson is all eyes and smiles. Together, the two actors combine for a few clever gambits, but it's mostly a muted affair.—*M.A.* (Beekman, Empire 25, and Union Square.)

MEMENTO

Guy Pearce plays Leonard, a former insurance investigator who has mislaid his short-term memory; leave the room and come back ten minutes later, and he won't remember you. To help his case, and to solve the apparent murder of his wife, Leonard tattoos himself with memoranda and drives around the lowlier districts of L.A. County. At the same time, he has a couple of acquaintances (Carrie-Anne Moss and Joe Pantoliano) who use his condition for their own unscrupulous ends. There is a fine, despairing comedy to these events—not just in our fidgety hero but in the constant thwarting of our need to know. The young British writer and director Christopher Nolan, who has every intention of putting us through the mill, doubles his fun by running the whole story backward.—*A.L.* (3/19/01) (Angelika Film Center, Astor Plaza, Battery Park 16, East 86th Street Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, and Olympia I and II.)

MOULIN ROUGE

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Ziegfeld.)

THE MUMMY RETURNS

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Orpheum VII, Union Square, and Waverly.)

1900

Bernardo Bertolucci's 1977 utopian folly is about two boys born in the North Italian region of Emilia-Romagna on the same day in 1901. Alfredo (Robert De Niro) is the heir to the vast landholdings of his grandfather (Burt Lancaster), and Olmo (Gérard Depardieu) is the bastard grandson of the patriarch (Sterling Hayden) of the peasant clan that lives on those holdings and labors for a share of the crop. Bertolucci is trying to make a people's film by drawing on the mythology of movies, as if it were a collective memory. In form, it's an opera-novel, and its homage is to Verdi, the great Emilian who died on the day of the two boys' birth; it has all of Bertolucci's themes and motifs, and one could call it the Portable Bertolucci, though it isn't portable. It's like a course to be enrolled in, with a guaranteed horror every hour; there are also sequences as great as any ever filmed.—*Pauline Kael* (Symphony Space; May 29.)

PANIC IN THE STREETS

Elia Kazan took a fairly conventional thriller script and made a tense, high-powered movie of it. Seeing this 1950 film, one wouldn't know that he had ever worked in the theatre: everything is kept moving, in a feverish, seething way, yet the performances are never sacrificed to the action. The setting is the New Orleans waterfront; a murder victim is discovered to be carrying plague, and a Public Health doctor (Richard Widmark) and a city detective (Paul Douglas) hunt for everybody who came into contact with him. Mean Jack Palance and frightened, sweaty Zero Mostel are the thugs they're after.—*P.K.* (Walter Reade Theatre; May 25 and May 29.)

SHREK

The Shrek of the title is a bile-green ogre with disgusting personal habits and, this being an animated feature, an essential sweetness of nature. On the orders of a wicked lord, he rescues a princess from a dragon, only to screw up the plans by falling in love with her. The new DreamWorks production is overtly snook-cocking, turning every available fairy tale on its head: the princess has a short temper and karate skills, the dragon has the hots for a donkey, and the lord's castle is as tacky as a theme park. On the other hand, the film itself is hardly rough and real; however cunning the rendering of surfaces, there's still something flat and charmless in the digital look, and most of the pleasure rises not from the main romance but from the quick, incidental gags. In particular, look out for the Three Little Breakdancing Pigs. With voices by Mike Myers, Cameron Diaz, Eddie Murphy, and John Lithgow.—*A.L.* (5/21/01) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Coronet Cinema, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Olympia I and II, Orpheum VII, and Union Square.)

STARTUP.COM

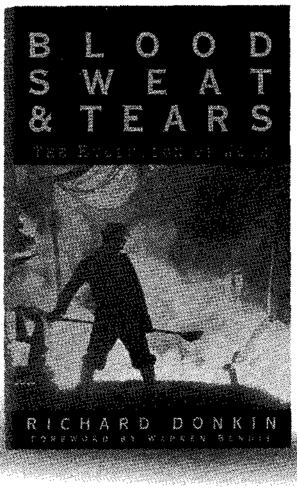
A fascinating cinéma-vérité documentary account of how two very young men—Kaleil Isaza Tuzman, a Goldman, Sachs employee, and Tom Herman, a techie—started an Internet company in New York, burned through sixty million dollars, lost their way, and got swallowed up by another company, all within eighteen months. The filmmakers Jehane Noujaim and Chris Hegedus nosed their way into meetings and arguments and drove around with the two men as they aired their desires and fears. Tuzman is burly and handsome, with an easy, ready way about him; Herman, who keeps growing and shaving a dark beard, is high-minded and tends to be diffident about the fate of the enterprise itself. The two men emerge from the fiasco without any money but with their friendship intact. The movie's account of their dealings with one another is painfully funny and very intimate, perhaps too much so: it would have been useful to have more detail about how the business actually worked and why it went wrong.—*D.D.* (5/14/01) (Film Forum.)

THE TAILOR OF PANAMA

A messy adaptation of the John le Carré novel, directed by John Boorman. As Andy Osnard, Pierce Brosnan plays an anti-Bond: the spy who loves nobody except himself. He is sent to Panama, where he recruits a local tailor, Harry Pendel (Geoffrey Rush)—who, like so many le Carré creations, has constructed the story of himself to escape from a shameful, secret past. Boorman wants to turn the novel's rueful satire into something sharp and sweaty, but the tone veers all over the place, and the plot feels like reckless fantasy.—*A.L.* (4/2/01) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea West, East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Union Square.)

TIME AND TIDE

The peaceful title is just a feint. In his thirty-eighth movie, the Hong Kong director Tsui Hark serves up



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a healthy measure of hardboiled alienation and gyroscopic firefights. There's also a dizzying plot involving Brazilian mercenaries, the Triad, and pregnant women, but the deft escapes and the how-did-they-do-that shots provide all the gravity the film needs. You can't look away. Pop stars Wu Bai and Nicholas Tse play the lead roles and contribute to the synth-heavy soundtrack. In Cantonese and Mandarin.—*M.A.* (Village East Cinemas.)

UNDER THE SAND
A fine new feature from the French director François Ozon: his quietest creation to date, but also his most provocative. Charlotte Rampling plays Marie, whose husband disappears from a beach; everyone but Marie believes him dead, and Ozon finds both method and madness in her noble refusal to meet the truth. What could have been glum or morbid is made almost thrilling by Ozon's ruthless cuts and punchy compositions, and Rampling sways back and forth between the litheness of youth and the fallen hopes of middle age. The ending, suitably enough, is too mysterious for words. With Bruno Cremer as the missing man. In French.—*A.L.* (5/21/01) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Quad Cinema.)

WITH A FRIEND LIKE HARRY. . .
A smart new horror story, at once thrilling and upsetting, from the director Dominik Moll. Michel (Laurent Lucas), a typically fretful father on vacation with his wife and children, meets an old schoolmate named Harry (Sergi López), who promptly starts changing Michel's life for the better. This entails buying him a new car and then getting to work on his ornery parents, his tired wife, and his frustrated ambitions as a writer. You can't really fault Harry's logic, and that's what makes him so daunting; his analysis of Michel's messy existence would do for just about anyone. It's his homicidal methods that somehow feel de trop, although Michel can no more be rid of him than Othello could slip from the clutches of Iago. All this is told with a tight, nervy concentration. Anyone thinking of getting married and starting a family should probably stay clear of Moll's movie. As for driving around Europe, forget it. In French.—*A.L.* (5/7/01) (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

ALSO PLAYING

ANGEL EYES
Battery Park 16, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Village Theatre VII.
CALLE 54
Angelika Film Center.
EUREKA
State.
IN THE MOOD FOR LOVE (2/5/01)
Village East Cinemas.
THE KING IS ALIVE
Chelsea Cinemas, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and Quad Cinema.
POLLOCK (3/5/01)
64th and 2nd and Village East Cinemas.
SPY KIDS
East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, and Union Square.
TOWN & COUNTRY (5/14/01)
Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, and Kips Bay Theatre.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.
Battery Park 16, West St. at Vesey St. (945-3418).

Taste Italian Style

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Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese and Chianti Classico wines are available at the following locations:

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May 21st, May 22nd & May 23rd 5:00 p.m.–11:00 p.m.

Morrell Wine Bar
(212) 262-7700
1 Rockefeller Plaza, NY, NY
May 22nd 5:00 p.m.–7:00 p.m.

Boxcar Lounge
(212) 473-2830
168 Avenue B, NY, NY
May 22nd 7:00 p.m.–9:00 p.m.

Gotham Wines & Spirits
(212) 932-0990
2517 Broadway, NY, NY
May 25th 4:00 p.m.–7:00 p.m.

Hay Day Wine Shop
(203) 438-9100
21A Governor Street, Ridgefield, CT
May 26th 12:00 p.m.–4:00 p.m.

Best Cellars
(212) 426-4200
1291 Lexington Avenue, NY, NY
May 26th 2:00 p.m.–4:00 p.m.

Alfredo of Rome
(212) 397-0100
4 West 49th Street, NY, NY
May 31st, June 7th & June 14th 6:00 p.m.–9:00 p.m.

Grande Harvest Wines
(212) 682-5855
33 Grand Central Terminal, NY, NY
June 1st 4:30 p.m.–7:30 p.m.

Park East Wines & Spirits
(212) 534-2093
1657 York Avenue, NY, NY
June 2nd 1:00 p.m.–5:00 p.m.

Stew Leonard's Vineyard
(914) 315-4713
1 Stew Leonard Drive, Yonkers, NY
June 2nd 1:00 p.m.–6:00 p.m.

Astor Wines & Spirits
(212) 674-7500
12 Astor Place, NY, NY
June 2nd 3:00 p.m.–6:00 p.m.

Columbus Avenue Wines & Spirits
(212) 865-7070
730 Columbus Avenue, NY, NY
June 9th 1:00 p.m.–5:00 p.m.

Union Square Wines
(212) 675-8100
33 Union Square West, NY, NY
June 9th 1:00 p.m.–5:00 p.m.

Sherry-Lehmann
(212) 838-7500
679 Madison Avenue, NY, NY
June 13th 3:00 p.m.–6:00 p.m.

Italian Wine Merchants
(212) 473-2323
108 East 16th Street, NY, NY
June 23rd 1:00 p.m.–5:00 p.m.

Zachys
(914) 723-0241
16 East Parkway, Scarsdale, NY
July 7th 12:00 p.m.–4:00 p.m.

Divine Bar
(212) 791-9463
55 Liberty Street, NY, NY
July 10th 6:30 p.m.–9:00 p.m.

Door prizes available at all locations. Ask for Parmigiano-Reggiano and Chianti Classico at your favorite retailer.

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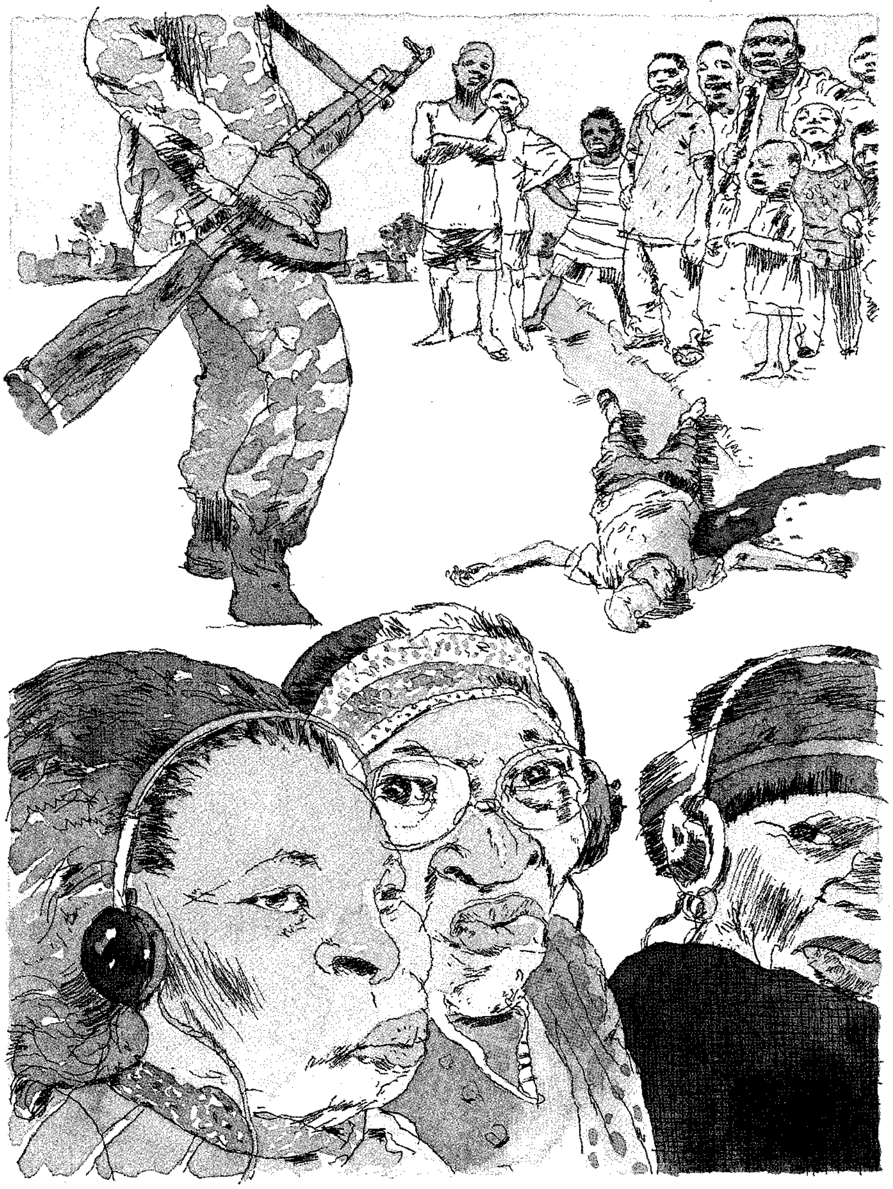

At BAM Rose Cinemas, "A Long Night's Journey Into Day."

JOHN CUNEO

Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
Coronet Cinemas, Third Ave. at 59th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Pioneer, 155 E. 3rd St. (254-3300).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (875-5600).
Waverly 1 and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—"The Responsive Eye: A Brian De Palma Retrospective." May 26 at 2: "The Fury" (1978). ♦ May 26 at 4:15: "Mission to Mars" (2000). ♦ May 27 at 2: "Scarface" (1983). ♦ May 27 at 5:30: "Carlito's Way" (1993). ♦ Repertory night. May 26 at 6:30: "My Life as a Dog" (1985, Lasse Hallström; in Swedish).

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES

32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—May 23 at 8: "The Gods of Times Square" (†). ♦ A Tsui Hark retrospective. All films are in Cantonese. May 25 at 5:40 and May 27 at 3: "We're Going to Eat You" (1980). ♦ May 25 at 7:30 and May 27 at 7: "Green Snake" (1993). ♦ May 25 at 9:30 and May 26 at 5: "Peking Opera Blues" (1986). ♦ May 25 at 11:40 and May 26 at 3: "A Chinese Ghost Story 2" (1990, Ching Siu-Tung). ♦ May 26 at 7 and May 27 at 9: "The Chinese Feast" (1995). ♦ May 26 at 9:10 and May 27 at 4:45: "Swordsman" (1990). ♦ May 26 at 9:30 and May 27 at 11: "Swordsman 2" (1992, Ching). ♦ May 28 at 6 and 8:30: "The Blade" (1995).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS

30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (777-3456)—The Dance Africa 2001 festival. May 23-27 at 4:30: "Bye Bye Africa" (1999, Mahamat-Saleh Haroun; in French and Chadian). ♦ May 23-27 at 7: "Faat-Kine" (2000, Ousmane Sembene; in French and Wolof). ♦ May 23-24 at 9:30 and May 25-27 at 2 and 9:30: "A Long Night's Journey Into Day" (†). ♦ May 28 at 6:50 and 9:10: "Black Jesus" (1968, Valerio Zurlini; in French). ♦ May 29 at 5 and 8: "The Desert of the Tartars" (1976, Zurlini; in English and French).

CINEMA CLASSICS

332 E. 11th St. (971-1015)—May 23-24 at 8 and 9:50: "Kika" (1993, Pedro Almodóvar; in Spanish). ♦ May 25 and May 28-29 at 8 and 10 and May 26-27 at 6, 8, and 10: "The Conformist" (1970, Bernardo Bertolucci; in Italian).

FILM FORUM

W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—May 23-29 at 1, 3:45, 6:40, and 9:25: "Juliet of the Spirits" (1965, Federico Fellini; in Italian).

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (360-4321)—"Conversations Between Shadows and Light: Italian Cinematography." May 25 at 7 and May 26 at 3: "The Leopard" (1963, Luchino Visconti; in Italian). ♦ May 26 at 7: "Fellini's Casanova" (1976, Federico Fellini; in Italian).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Through June 19: "First Run Features: A Retrospective, 1979-2001." May 24 at 2:30 and May 27 at 5:30: "I, the Worst of All" (1990, María Luisa Bemberg; in Spanish). ♦ May 24 at 6: "Light Keeps Me Company" (2000, Carl-Gustav Nykvist; in Swedish). ♦ May 25 at 2:30 and May 26 at 4:30: "42 Up" (1999, Michael Apted). ♦ May 25 at 6 and May 27 at 1: "Dad on the Run" (2000, Dante Desarthe; in French). ♦ May 25 at 8 and May 26 at 2: "Arguing the World" (1997, Joseph Dorman). ♦ May 27 at 3:15: "A Life Apart: Hasidism in America" (1997, Menachem Daum and Oren Rudavsky). ♦ May 28 at 2: "Joe's Bed-Stuy Barbershop: We Cut Heads" (1982, Spike Lee). ♦ May 28 at 5: "Wild Style" (1982, Charlie Ahearn).

SYMPHONY SPACE

2537 Broadway, at 95th St. (864-5400)—"Cinema Italian Style." May 29 at 6: "1900" (†).

WALTER READE THEATRE

Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Through May 31: "On the Edge with Richard Widmark," a retrospective of the actor's films. May 23 at 1:30 and May 24 at 1 and 8: "Down to the Sea in Ships" (1949, Henry Hathaway). ♦ May 23 at 4 and 8 and May 27 at 6: "Road House" (1948, Jean Negulesco). ♦ May 23 at 6:15: "Don't Bother to Knock" (1952, Roy Baker). ♦ May 25 at 2 and 6:15 and May 28 at 6: "The Bedford Incident" (1965, James B. Harris). ♦ May 25 at 4:15 and 8:30 and May 29 at 1 and 6: "Panic in the Streets" (†). ♦ May 26 at 4 and 9 and May 28 at 1: "Warlock" (1959, Edward Dmytryk). ♦ May 26 at 6:30 and May 27 at 8: "The Cobweb" (1955, Vincente Minnelli). ♦ May 27 at 4: "Slattery's Hurricane" (1949, André De Toth). ♦ May 28 at 3:30 and 8:30: "Madigan" (1968, Don Siegel). ♦ May 29 at 3 and 8: "Cheyenne Autumn" (1964, John Ford). ♦ Movies for kids. May 26-27 at 2: "Madeline" (1998, Daisy von Scherler Mayer).

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wired for business

BY SUSAN BRESLOW SARDONE

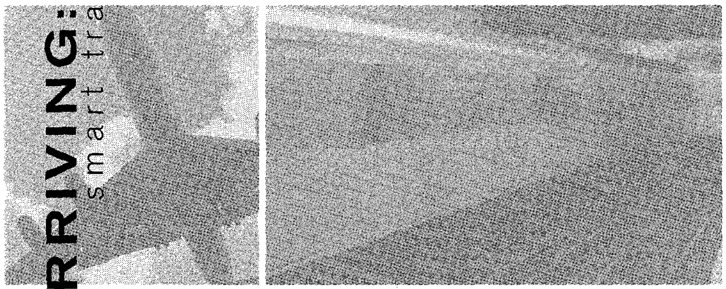
Travel technology is going places. With on-line sales topping a cool billion in January alone, travel is the one E-commerce category that didn't go into hibernation during the long digital winter. More than half of all U.S. travellers today book trips via one-stop Web sites that provide all of the travel basics: airline tickets, hotel and car-rental reservations, and more. Travelocity, with more than twenty-seven million members has emerged as the leader of the on-line pack. "We are changing the way the world shops and travels," said Travelocity president and CEO Terrell Jones recently. And his words were no idle boast.

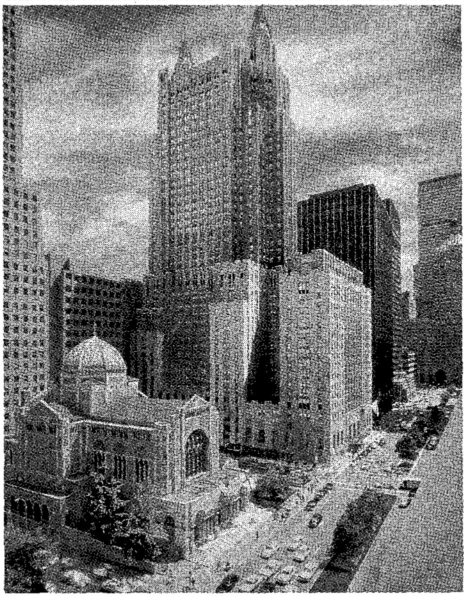
The same imperative for change has rumbled powerfully through the off-line travel industry. The old way of doing business is rapidly disappearing and a new digital infrastructure is revolutionizing the business trip experience. PDA/cellphone combos are proliferating and credit card-sized modems are bringing essential data to laptops at dial-up connection speeds. Soon, we'll be able to wirelessly transfer thousand-page documents as well as high-quality sound and video. For better or worse, the office is everywhere and as wireless broadband coverage grows, we'll be nearly as connected and productive in Timbuktu as we are at our desks. It's the new travel intelligence, and it's working overtime for road warriors.

> As wireless broadband coverage grows, we'll be as connected and productive in Timbuktu as we are at our desks.

courtesy of W hotels

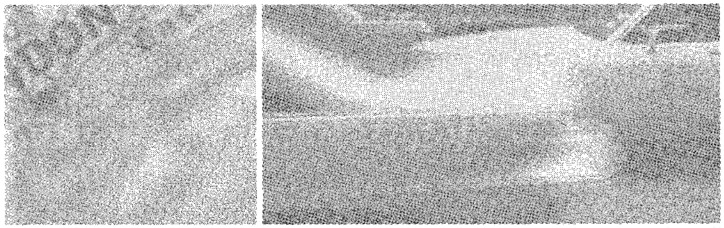
ELITE RETREAT
The W's sweeping staircase in Union Square leads to the hotel's design-centric rooms and suites.





courtesy of The Waldorf-Astoria

TOPICAL TRANSFORMATION
Emblematic of the grand hotel, The Waldorf-Astoria is creating an ultra-tech executive meeting center.



courtesy of The Park Hyatt

PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT
Like to rendezvous with your favorite '98 Reserve Shiraz in the late afternoon? The Park Hyatt's electronic guest-tracking system stores patrons' requests for future referencing.

TREND RADAR

With more than forty-four million Americans taking an average of six business trips each year, hotels are now equipped like mission control headquarters. Multiline speaker phones, dataports, voicemail, twenty-four hour concierge services, and high-tech business centers have turned some of the world's best hotels into virtual offices. Zagat's 2001 edition of "Top U.S. Hotels, Resorts and Spas" indexes a hundred and fifty properties out of eight hundred that now offer in-room, high-speed connections. And if that doesn't seem particularly impressive, bear in mind that in 1998 there were none.

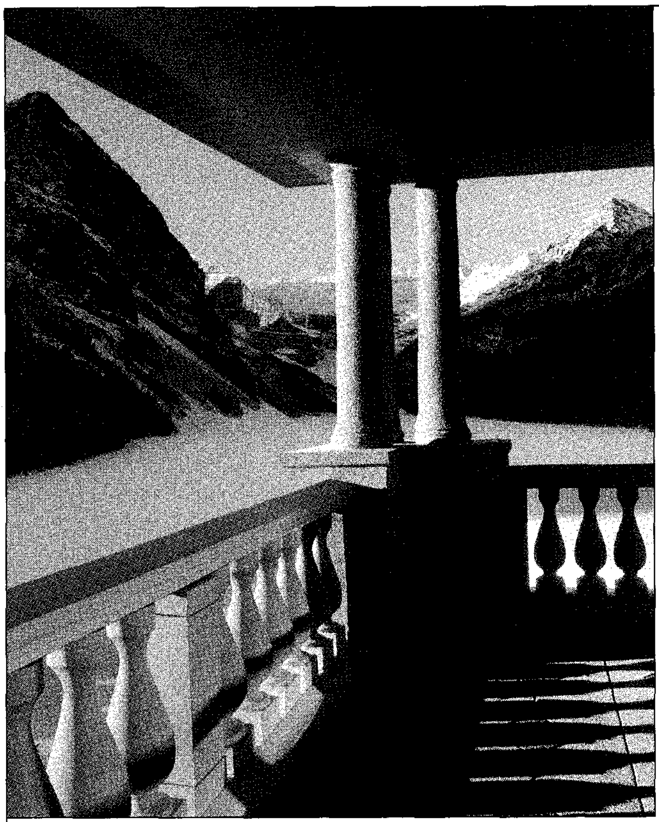
Conceived for a new generation of style-conscious executives, **W hotels** (owned by Starwood Resorts) is a phalanx of new and renovated landmark properties with a mix of design-centric rooms and suites that feature twenty-seven-inch Web TVs with ultra-fast Web access. (Hypo-allergenic feather pillows and 250 thread-count linens help make screen-staring a pleasure.) The hotel's Whatever-Whenever concierge service efficiently handles middle-of-the-night requests, including one recently for a stenographer to document proceedings at a 3 A.M. meeting, and another from a graphics artist who urgently needed colored markers to prepare for an early-morning presentation.

Scheduled to open June 1st, the **Peninsula Chicago** has been designed as a truly smart place to stay: T-1 lines, fax machines, twenty-seven-inch Sony Wega flat-screen TVs, and bedside command centers are standard in rooms. Travelling tycoons may find the 3,500-square-foot Peninsula Suite, with its separate living and sleeping quarters and private workout room, an ideal location for a cloistered business confab. Break for a stroll on the suite's private 4,000-square-foot sun deck overlooking Lake Michigan. Or get creative and invite your colleagues to join you in the outdoor whirlpool hot tub.

The Park Hyatt—another distinctive addition to the Chicago skyline—provides an oversized, in-room safe that can fit a laptop as well as recharge its batteries during storage. The hotel's Gold Passport guest-profiling system records guests' requests such as floor preferences, special equipment requirements, or the need for a personal butler. It's all kept in the savant-like request tracking system to ensure that patrons' needs continue to be met on subsequent visits.

You don't have to be a company president to partake of the President's Club guest-recognition program at Fairmont Hotels, but with all of its perks you may start feeling like one. Members get their own Fairmont Web page, where they can view their account status and select benefits. Depending on how many times a member stays at any of the thirty-seven Fairmont Hotels in the U.S. and Canada, rewards may include a complimentary night, a dining certificate, bonus frequent-flyer miles, gratis green fees, or a spa visit.

Modernizing a landmark property calls for an unobtrusive solution. That's why, when The Plaza Hotel in Manhattan went wireless it installed a high-speed system and furnished all eight hundred rooms with custom PCs. So there's no need to pack your laptop if you just need basics like a word processor and net access. Use the hotel PC to order theatre tickets, make restaurant reservations, retrieve neighborhood maps, and send and receive E-mail. As of next month, guests can roam the city toting courtesy cell phones that will intercept calls made to their rooms.



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MOTOROLA
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MENU

THE NEXTEL WAVE

Nextel Communications is riding the crest of the wireless wave. Recently Nextel introduced its Motorola **i85s** phone ($199.99), the first in North America to use Java technology. Pre-loaded with several Java applications, the i85s, like all Nextel Internet-ready phones, delivers digital cellular voice service, digital two-way radio, and text and numeric messaging. In the future, as more Java applications are developed, Nextel subscribers will be able to transform their handsets into Personal Digital Assistants, reducing the number of electronic devices they'll need to pack.

Earlier this year, Nextel broke new ground with the **i2000plus** ($199.99), the first Internet-ready, digital cellphone that's "dual mode," which means it uses both the iDEN network, for broad U.S. coverage, and GSM, the leading standard in eighty other countries. Nextel customers can now use the same phone and number worldwide, as well as access the Internet stateside. The i2000plus is bundled with smart-business features such as caller ID, built-in speakerphone, three-way calling, alternate line service, and multiple language menus. Nextel plans to expand its digital coverage to more countries and ultimately provide Internet access internationally via its wireless phones. Look for Nextel's 24/7 customer care that will soon be augmented by a business traveller's concierge service that books airline and hotel reservations.

Nextel's i2000plus phone is also available for rental. So, if you're going to be in Europe on business, you can stay connected with the U.S. through the company's leasing program.

For more information on Nextel wireless phones and services, call 1-800-754-6910.

Those with reservations at Manhattan's **Muse** hotel will soon be able to give the PDA-equipped bellhop a credit card to swipe and it'll promptly be returned along with a key card for their room. At the epicenter of New York's financial district, the **Holiday Inn Wall Street** allows repeat guests to effect their own wireless check-in using a Bluetooth-enabled Personal Digital Assistant or cell phone. (Named after a tenth-century Nordic king, Bluetooth technology permits cell phones, PDAs, and laptops to share information via short-range radio transceivers.) After entering a PIN number, arrivals are given their room number and can obtain access.

Come September, **The Waldorf-Astoria's** eighteenth floor will be transformed into the city's most technologically advanced private meeting space. Its Executive Meeting Center will feature T-1 connections, direct worldwide satellite links, 250 direct-dial telephone lines, fiber-optic Webcasting, video-conferencing capabilities, and an on-site technical support team.

Suite Sanctuary

According to a recent survey conducted by on-line business travel magazine *Frequent Flyer*, fifty-five per cent of its readers carve time out for recreation in their workplace destination. Most business travellers need a tranquil refuge where they can repair from jet lag and recharge for the next power meet. But a home away from the home office must be well equipped, because knowing that a fax can be sent at four in the morning is likely to increase a businessperson's comfort level. The best sanctuaries are hotels that help guests unwind as well as stay productive.

At the **Bacara Resort & Spa** in Santa Barbara, rooms feature high-speed Internet access and two-line telephones with personalized voicemail. Fax machines and PCs are available upon request. The resort's 42,000-square-foot multilevel spa features a heated pool, one-on-one training, and both indoor and outdoor massage areas. In the evening, guests can don Bacara bathrobes in the solitude of their rooms, light a fire in the fireplace, and choose between audio, video, or DVD entertainment. After slipping between the luxurious Frette sheets, sweet dreams ensue.

In New York City, where travellers unaccustomed to the whine of sirens may fall prey to sleeplessness, **The Benjamin** offers some solutions: Double-pane windows keep the noise at bay and a Sleep Concierge proffers a choice of eleven types of pillows, including a five-foot body cushion. The concierge can also schedule a massage, arrange for a bedside white-noise machine, or have late-night treats delivered from Larry Forgione's An American Place.

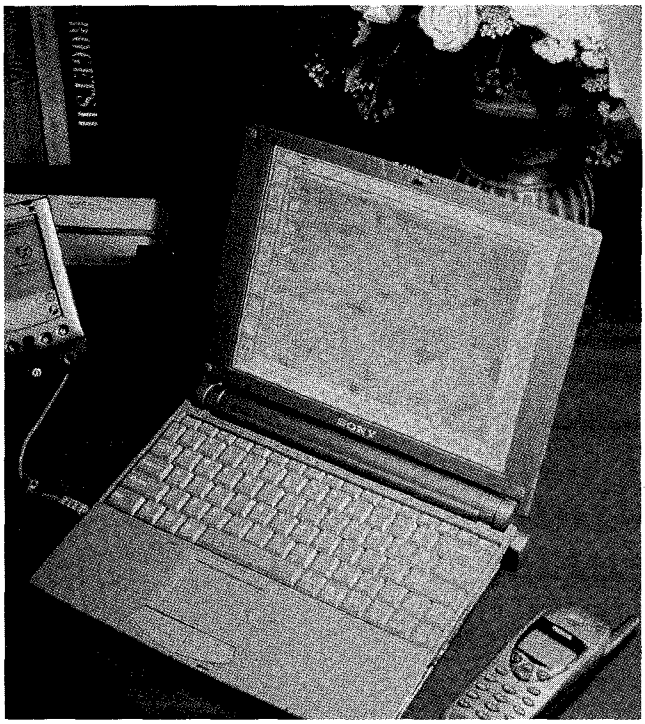
EXEC TECH

While laptops have gotten lighter, the smart traveller's tool chest—complete with computer, cell phone, PDA, beeper or BlackBerry text-pager, and perhaps a Cobra two-way radio—has not yet lost sufficient ballast. But new slim-line PDAs and cell phone/PDA combos are lightening the business traveller's load. PDA competitors **Palm** and **Handspring** have both introduced sleeker monochrome models as well as color units. However, there's still a built-in penchant for techno-bloat: Palm's slim, four-ounce **m500** ($399) has an expansion slot that tempts a user to fill it with video clips or applications. Handspring's trim **Visor Edge** ($399; 4.8 ounces) gets bulkier when any of approximately fifty hardware modules (including digital camera, VisorPhone, MP3 player, wireless modem, or GPS unit) are added on. Heads up, multitaskers: A leading consumer magazine just gave raves to the Sony Clié ($350; 4.2 ounces), a Palm clone, with a jog dial that obviates the need for a lot of stylus tapping.

TWO FOR THE MONEY

Despite the seeming ubiquity of annoying cell phone conversations in public spaces, fewer than fifty per cent of households have wireless devices, according to the Personal Communications Industry Association. But just wait: Usage is projected to reach critical mass in 2003. Perhaps by then we will have phoneless phone booths—clear lucite kiosks where logorrhea can be discreetly managed.

The smart set is abuzz about the wedding of PDAs and Web-enabled cell phones. The **VisorPhone** module for Handspring devices ($299) provides four easy ways to make a call: dial direct from your address book, speed dial from a custom list, use the dialpad, or redial from your Call History log. Three new all-in-one units (about $500 plus monthly charges) are the **QCP 6035 Kyocera Smartphone**, the **LG InfoComm TP3000**, and the **Ericsson R380s**. But before rushing out to buy one, know that lighter, faster, and less expensive models that do even more will be available in a mere six months.



courtesy of Holiday Inn Wall Street

NET GAINS
The Holiday Inn Wall Street's so-called S.M.A.R.T Floor is outfitted with virtually all it takes to conduct business.

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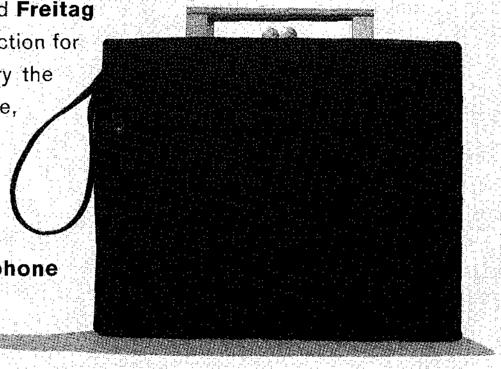
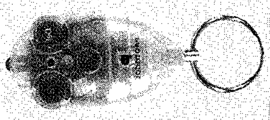
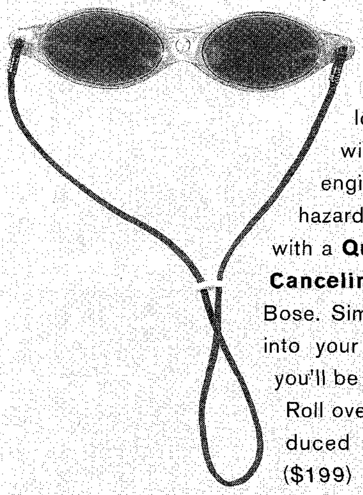
SMART SUCCESSORIES

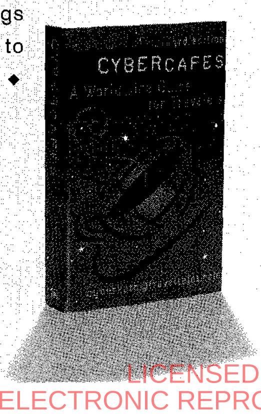
What's flying off the shelves of **Flight 001**, the Greenwich Village store owned by fashion acolytes bent on bringing travel accessories to the fore? All manner of fashionable totes, knapsacks, and messenger-style pouches. Some, especially those by Swedish ecology-minded **Freitag** ($85 to $155), are made from recycled material. Need protection for your road gadgets? Flight 001, which was the first to carry the touted **Philippe Starck-designed Samsonite** luggage, stocks a swank gray lightweight briefcase for laptops ($225) with high-density PVC backing that can also store your PDA and cell phone. Luggage from Italy's chic **Mandarina Duck** will premier in the store next month. Other smart successories include an eight-foot **Auto Retractable Telephone Cord** ($12) for easy laptop connections, **Protocol's Digital Message Recorder** ($22), and **Oscar + Dehn's Eye Life** ($14) for soothing your eyes on long flights. Flight 001 (877-435-8663) franchises are being planned for Los Angeles, Miami, and Chicago. . . . Ever find yourself flying at 35,000 feet with the roar of the jets so loud you considered pleading with the pilot to shut the engines down? To forestall such a hazardous yen, you can arm yourself with a **QuietComfort Acoustic Noise Canceling Headset** ($299) from Bose. Simply plug the padded headset into your armrest outlet, and at last, you'll be able to hear yourself think. . . . Roll over, Dick Tracy. **Casio** has introduced a **Wrist Camera WQV-1** ($199) with supplementary PC Link Software ($49.95). Its grayscale screen doubles as a viewfinder and playback display. Up to a hundred images can be stored, and infrared data transfer allows images to be downloaded to a PC. The Wrist Camera also includes a stopwatch and databank storage for a hundred names and phone numbers. . . . Stay in touch even when you've left your laptop behind. The pocket-sized "**Cybercafes: A Worldwide Guide for Travelers**" (Ten Speed Press, $9.95) annotates no less than six hundred and fifty wired hangs from Akron to Kuala Lumpur. ◆



photos: Joseph Palmeri







Globetrotters may decide that only a tri-band GSM phone will do. Unlike the dual-mode Nextel, these use a single cellular standard that operates over the three different radio bands used in North America, Europe, and Asia. GSM phones don't enjoy coverage in the U.S. that is as broad as some other handsets, but they work in all the big cities and can send instant text messages without eating up airtime. If you need the services of one of these models overseas, consider a **Nokia 8890**, **Motorola TimePort p7389**, or **Ericsson T28**.

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To salve the frustration of a cancelled flight, a missed hotel wake-up call, an unavailable rental car, and other road hazards, the Biztravel Guarantee compensates customers up to a hundred dollars for inconveniences caused by designated airlines, hotels, and rental car companies.

Expedia.com and **Travelocity.com**, the two largest on-line travel agents, feature several tools geared for the corporate traveller. Both sites have repeat-a-trip functions that enable users to rebook the same itinerary at a later date and both permit an exec's assistant to book a flight, hotel, and rental car. Travelocity customers with a Web-enabled cell phone can use it to book or rebook a flight, search for a hotel or rental car, and check flight status and weather without having to go on-line or dial an 800 number.

Scheduled to launch in June, **Orbitz.com** has been threatening for more than a year to eclipse its competition in the arena of airline ticketing. A joint venture comprising more than two dozen airlines, its scope promises to be enormous. A search for fares between two cities will provide hundreds of choices, with every flight sorted by price and convenience. Search returns also will include Internet specials that formerly were available only at the Web sites of individual airlines. Additionally, Orbitz pledges not to promote the flights of preferred partners, but rather to provide unbiased and comprehensive information on its air fares.

THE DIGI-TERIAS

It used to be a challenge to come up with smart selections for where to dine when taking clients on the town, but digital resources now make it easy.

CitySearch.com provides restaurant information searchable by price, cuisine, and menu for dozens of domestic and international metropolitan areas. The comprehensive (and delightfully opinionated) **Timeout.com** permits visitors to search cafés or bars by district, and restaurants by cuisine. "Zagat Survey," the peoples' choice, is available on-line at **zagat.com**, as well as in packaged PDA software, slim guide books, and dining maps. Its restaurant reviews are available as free downloads from **vindigo.com**. They can be accessed from Web-enabled cell phones that use Nextel and other carriers.

Surf to **opentable.com**, which allows users to confirm dining reservations instantly at more than 1,100 fine restaurants in major U.S. cities. Prospective diners can also make reservations at any of the restaurants listed in Zagat's thirty-nine city guides by filling out an on-line form at **etravnet.com**. Confirmation is subsequently returned to the requester via E-mail.

WHEELING AND DEALING

One of the small pleasures smart travellers sometimes avail themselves of is renting a classic or exotic car. **Budget** (www.budget.com) offers the Jaguar

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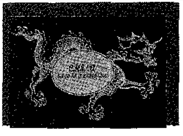

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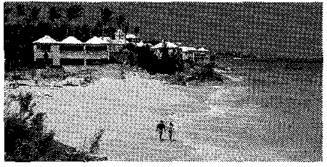

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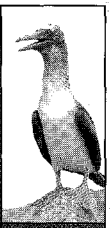

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S-type in some locations (though bargain-hunters may find Budget's low, Internet-only rates that don't include such luxe models even more appealing). **Thrifty** (www.thrifty.com) features a download on its site that enables a PDA user to book, review, or cancel a reservation without having to deal with a telephone operator. The most efficient way to find and book car rentals, though, is by using Travelocity or Expedia, which have exclusive deals with multiple rental companies.

Currently there's no better site than **Webflyer.com** to suss out frequent-travel incentives. Its comparison chart ranks airline programs side by side, helping mileage hounds determine the most generous plans. (Now if only all those programs would allow members to collect awards on-line.)

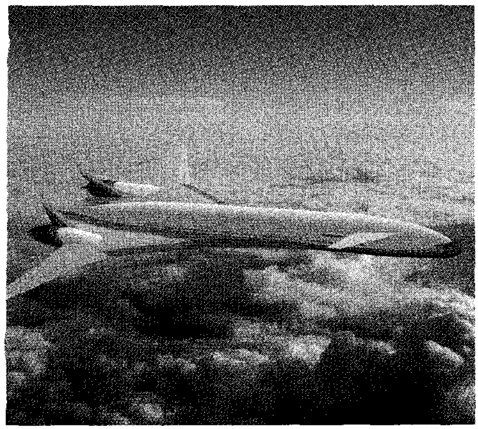
To inspect the gold standard, check Webflyer.com's Freddie Awards winners that are chosen by frequent travellers themselves. And there's no more up-to-the-second source than the site's FlyerTalk Bulletin Board, where seasoned travellers post their tips and travails. Before any business travel jaunt, embarking on-line is the smart way to go.

(Susan Breslow Sardone is the travel columnist for *Yahoo! Internet Life* and a travel guide for About.com.)

INSIDE INFORMATION

by Dan Ouellette

In the near future, count on flying to be more like cruising on an ocean liner or checking into a luxury hotel. Today's airline focus on seat ergonomics and entertainment options will give way to tomorrow's in-flight health spas, gyms with showers, shopping malls, mini movie theatres, and on-board casinos. Already in the works is **Airbus Industrie's A380**, the new two-deck superjumbo scheduled for commercial service in 2006. Accommodating 555 passengers, it will have forty-nine per cent more usable space than the largest aircraft flying today but only thirty-five per cent more seating. Several airlines have already inked deals for delivery. . . . Not to be outdone, **Boeing** recently announced plans to develop its Sonic Cruiser with double delta-shaped wings. Because the jetliner will cruise at near-supersonic speed, flight times will be reduced one hour for every three thousand air miles. . . . In the meantime, airlines are finding new ways to make air travel more convenient. **Lufthansa** has made the pre-boarding experience easier by allowing passenger check-ins via WAP (wireless access protocol) mobile phones and the Internet. This year, the airline will introduce Quick-Tickets machines in airport terminals where passengers can collect their pre-paid tickets and check in. On board, Lufthansa has made the ride more relaxing with its new deluxe business-class seats, featuring increased pitch (forty-eight inches) and adjustable headrests. And on arrival, in Frankfurt, Dusseldorf, Munich, or New York's JFK, the airline offers its business-class travellers Lufthansa Arrival Service lounges complete with showers. . . . Not surprisingly, some hotels in sybaritic locales serve as surrogate offices as well as retreats. **Pink Beach Club & Cottages** in Bermuda is wired with Internet access in all suites, and its meeting facility accommodates up to sixteen people. . . . **Prince Resorts Hawaii** has full-service business centers (with computer rentals and Internet access) at two of its properties: the Hapuna Beach Prince Hotel on the Big Island and the Hawaii Prince Hotel Waikiki. . . . For its corporate clientele, **La Jolla de Mismaloya** in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, recently opened a 7,000-square-foot corporate meeting center to complement its smaller conference rooms and Internet business office. . . . In addition to high-speed Internet access in every room, Denver's luxurious **Brown Palace Hotel** has introduced a group meeting package that includes a fully wired complimentary meeting space. After taking care of business, it's only a quick jaunt to the Rockies. . . . In such exotic destinations as Peru and Turkey, **INCA** (International Nature and Cultural Adventures) books deluxe hotels with high-tech services so that vacationers can keep track of enterprises back home. . . . The five **Bettoja Hotels** near Rome's main train station attract the biz-minded and cater to their downtime needs: The concierge can arrange trips (one day or longer) by rail to cultural centers such as Florence and Milan. . . . Overworked execs winding down in Europe can avail themselves of **Stay & Visit Italy's** eight-day Italian spa experience. . . . For those who are conference-bound in China, **Aaron Travel** custom-designs off-the-business-track excursions to explore this fascinating country. . . . In addition to organizing individual and group tours to Tunisia and Turkey, **TunisUSA** arranges special interest itineraries for financial execs, journalists, and other professionals. For example, doctors recently visited Tunisian emergency rooms and rural clinics. . . . Touring company **Cox & Kings** figures if you've gone halfway around the world on company time to visit India's Silicon Valley, Bangalore, why not take in sights the country is famous for, like a one-day detour to the Taj Mahal? ◆



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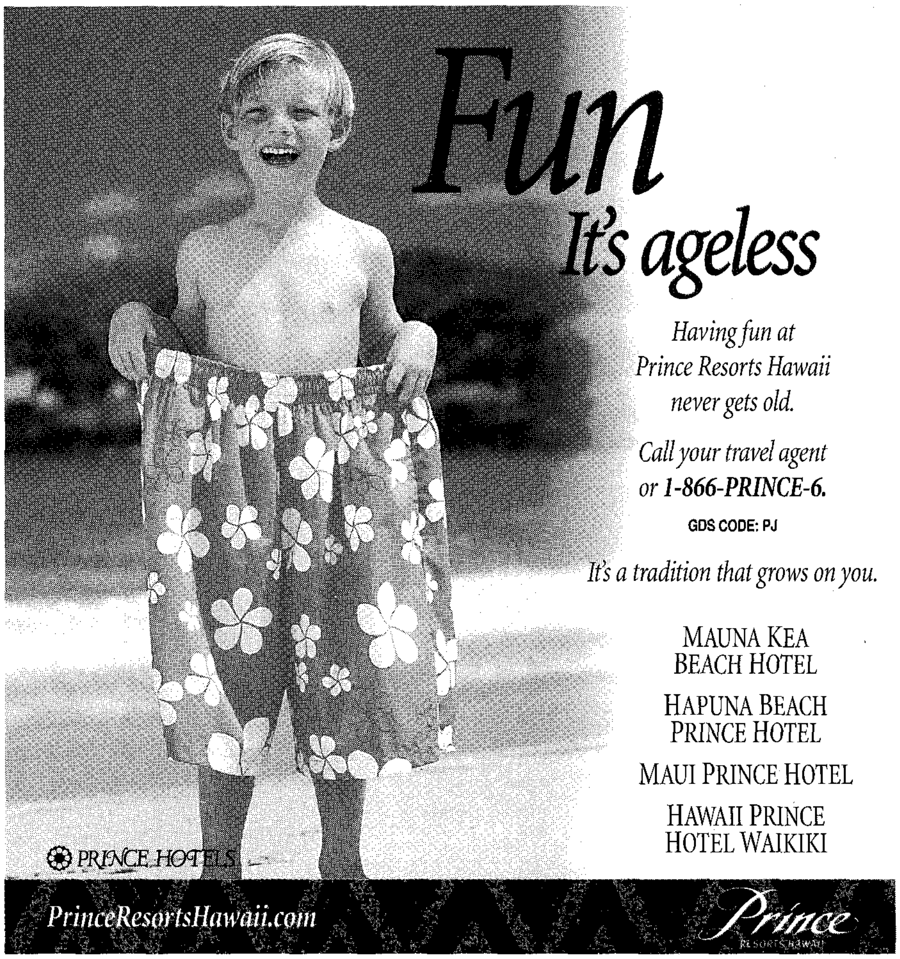

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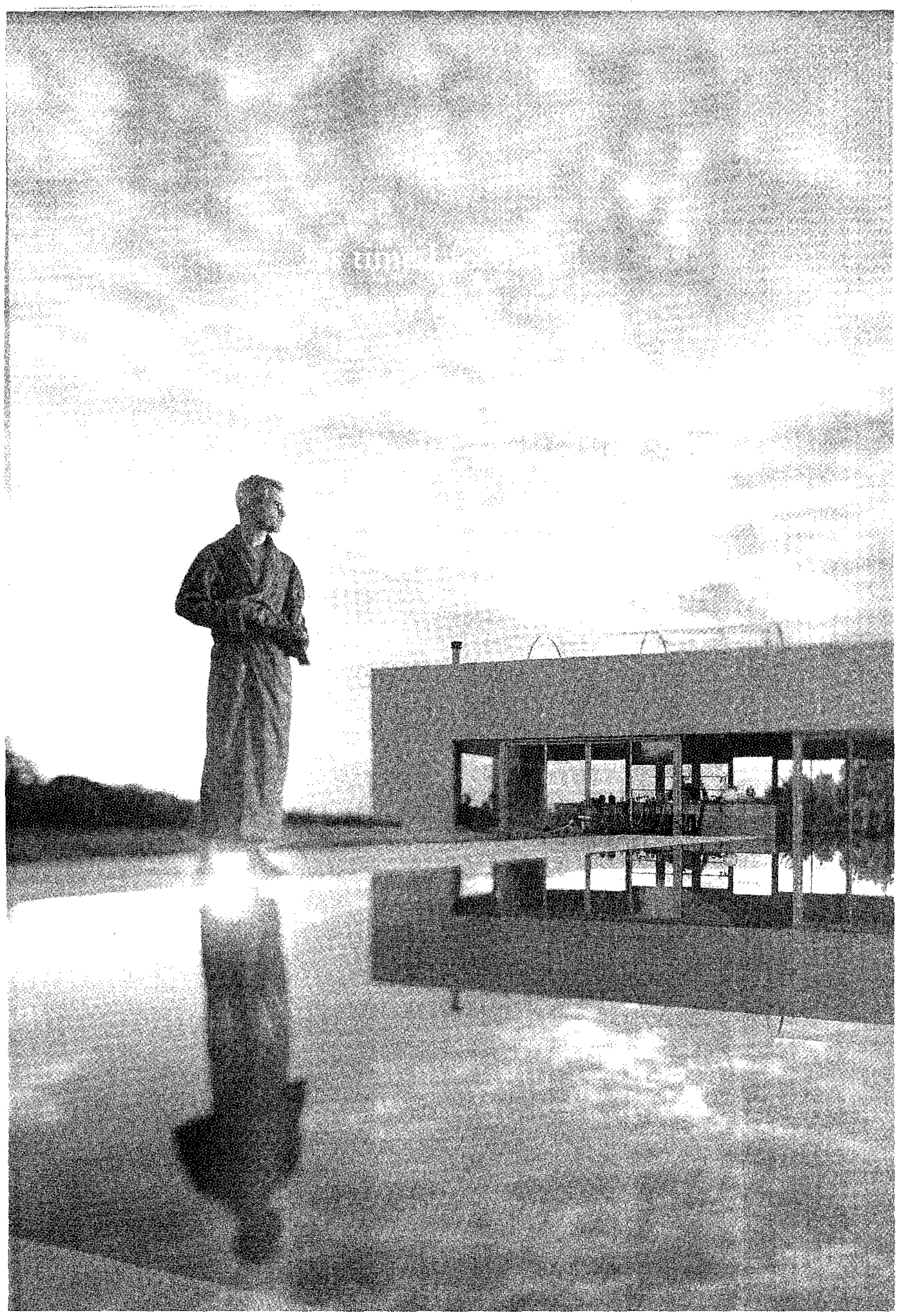

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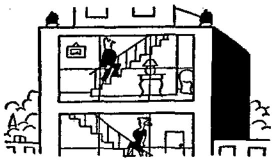
THE
NEW YORKER

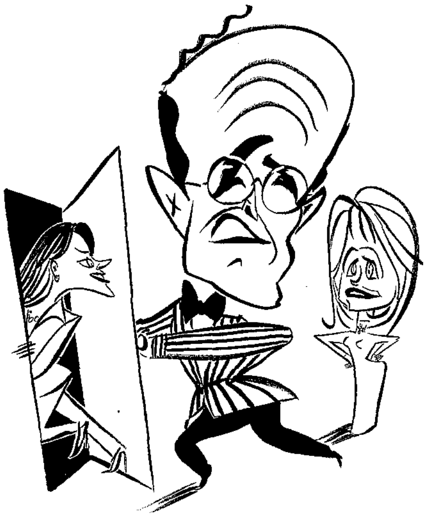
THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
T.M.I.



Here are a few fun facts about the cast of Anonymous v. Anonymous, which, believe it or not, is the official, court-certified name of the divorce proceeding between the Mayor of New York, Rudolph W. Giuliani, and his lawfully wedded wife:

The Mayor's divorce lawyer, Raoul Felder, is a member of the Mayor's decency-in-art commission, although it was not in that capacity that he announced last week that "Mrs. Giuliani should get a life" and that she is "an uncaring mother" with "twisted motives." Mayor Giuliani's wife does not call herself Mrs. Giuliani. She calls herself Donna Hanover. This is not her maiden name but, rather, is derived from the name of her first husband. Her maiden name is Donna Kofnovec, which is a less good name for an actress and television personality than is Donna Hanover. Ms. Hanover's career is going well. Last year, she appeared Off Broadway in "The Vagina Monologues" and had her own show on the Food Network. Now she is the host of "Famous Homes & Hideaways," a syndicated television program. She herself lives in a famous home, Gracie Mansion. So does the Mayor, who has been relegated to a bathroomless study. The lawyers in Anonymous v. Anonymous have lately been preoccupied with this famous home, and with the question of whether it should be permissible for the Mayor's lady friend, Judith Nathan, to set foot inside it. Ms. Nathan's name is derived from that of her first husband, from whom she was divorced in 1992. She and the Mayor have been companions for two years, and for the past year they have frequently appeared together in public. The Mayor, too, has been married before. Recently, he attended a charity function with both Ms. Nathan and the first Mrs. Giuliani, Regina Peruggi, who is the president of the Central Park Conservancy. They divorced in 1982, soon after the future mayor met Ms. Hanover. (Mr. Giuliani and Ms. Peruggi are second cousins, so they are still related.) On April 27th, the Mayor gave a reception at Gracie Mansion for a group of civic leaders from Dallas, Texas, some of whom had played golf with him that morning. Ms. Nathan attended the reception, too. Ms. Hanover was upstairs. According to "sources" quoted last week in the *Post* and the *News*, Ms. Hanover heard the shower running and, thinking it was Ms. Nathan, positioned herself to unmask, or untowel, the intruder. The showerer turned out to be a Dallas golfer, freshening up after his round with the Mayor. Meanwhile, down below, Ms. Nathan was hustled out through a side entrance. Doors slammed. Feet scuffled. Whoops!



Judith Nathan, Rudolph Giuliani, and Donna Hanover

Great stuff, eh? A delicious combination of soap opera and French farce, *n'est-ce pas*? Well, *non*. The mayoral marital miasma is less amusing than it ought to be. Mostly, as Ross Perot used to say, it's just sad. The tabloids, which in such matters are the newspapers of record, are doing their duty, with page-one wood like (these are from the *Post*) "GET HER OUT OF MY HOUSE!," "JUDI STANDS BY RUDY," and "CRUELLA DEHANOVER." But one senses that their hearts aren't really in it. Too many of the details are unfunny. The participants are otherwise respectable middle-aged people. Children of vulnerable ages are involved. The Mayor is ill with prostate cancer and the therapies that accompany it. Last week, his "camp" put it about that he has fre-

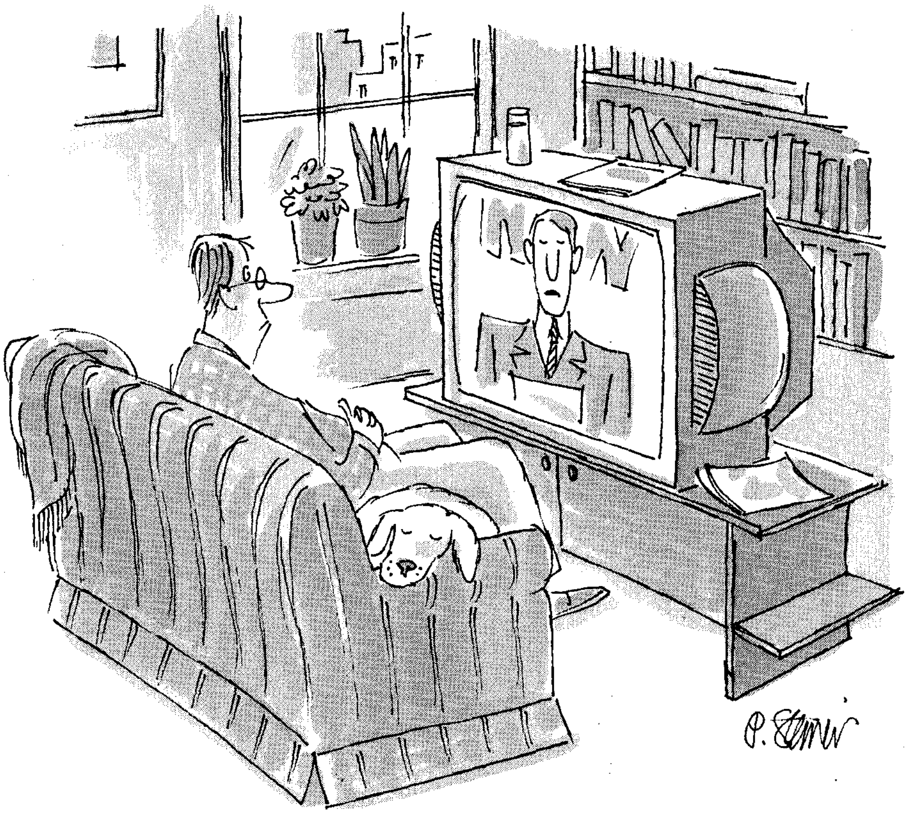
ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

quently vomited through the night, miserable and alone in his corner of the silent mansion; that his radiation treatments are so painful he is often barely able to walk; and that he has been rendered impotent.

The promulgation of these details (particularly the last, from which we are to infer that adultery is technically impossible) breaks new P.R. ground. It's the HBO version of "Spin City," much as "The Sopranos," of which the Mayor is a devotee, is the HBO version of the anodyne crime melodramas on the networks. Mr. Giuliani has blamed the press for the humiliations being visited upon him and everyone around him. To cover this story, however, reporting skills are not required; stenographic skills suffice. The salacious tidbits come straight from the parties directly involved. Unlike Gary Hart, Mr. Giuliani is not a victim of gotcha journalism; unlike Bill Clinton, he is not a victim of gotcha politics. Everyone agrees that he has been a remarkable mayor, perhaps a great one. No one is out to destroy his political career, which in any case is in abeyance. He is a term-limited lame duck who has feathered his own nest, and fouled it. And, to be sure, the Mayor is notoriously deficient in the empathy department. Nevertheless, the man is suffering. They all are.

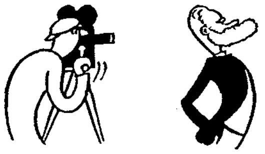
If this unhappy business has any larger significance, it is as another chapter in the history of the decline of marriage as a public institution. Once upon a time, when marriage was seen as an arrangement not just between two people but also between a couple, their children, and the fabric of society, the public face of a marriage carried as much moral weight as its private face, and this weight was intrinsic—it did not automatically vanish simply because it no longer corresponded to the state of the couple's intimate relations. The decencies were observed, and not just in art museums. In the nineteen-twenties, when Mayor Jimmy Walker, a married man, was having a flagrant affair with a showgirl, the newspapers barely hinted at it. This was not because journalism was more restrained; the tabloids of the era—the *News*, the *Mirror*, the *Evening Graphic*—make today's look like *L'Osservatore Romano*. It was because society was more restrained. The collapse of such restraints—such hypocrisies, if you prefer—has doubtless been a boon to authenticity, equality, and personal liberty. Perhaps there has been a net gain. Still, why doesn't he just move out? Traditionally, that's what the cad is supposed to do. And, if he won't, why doesn't she?

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*



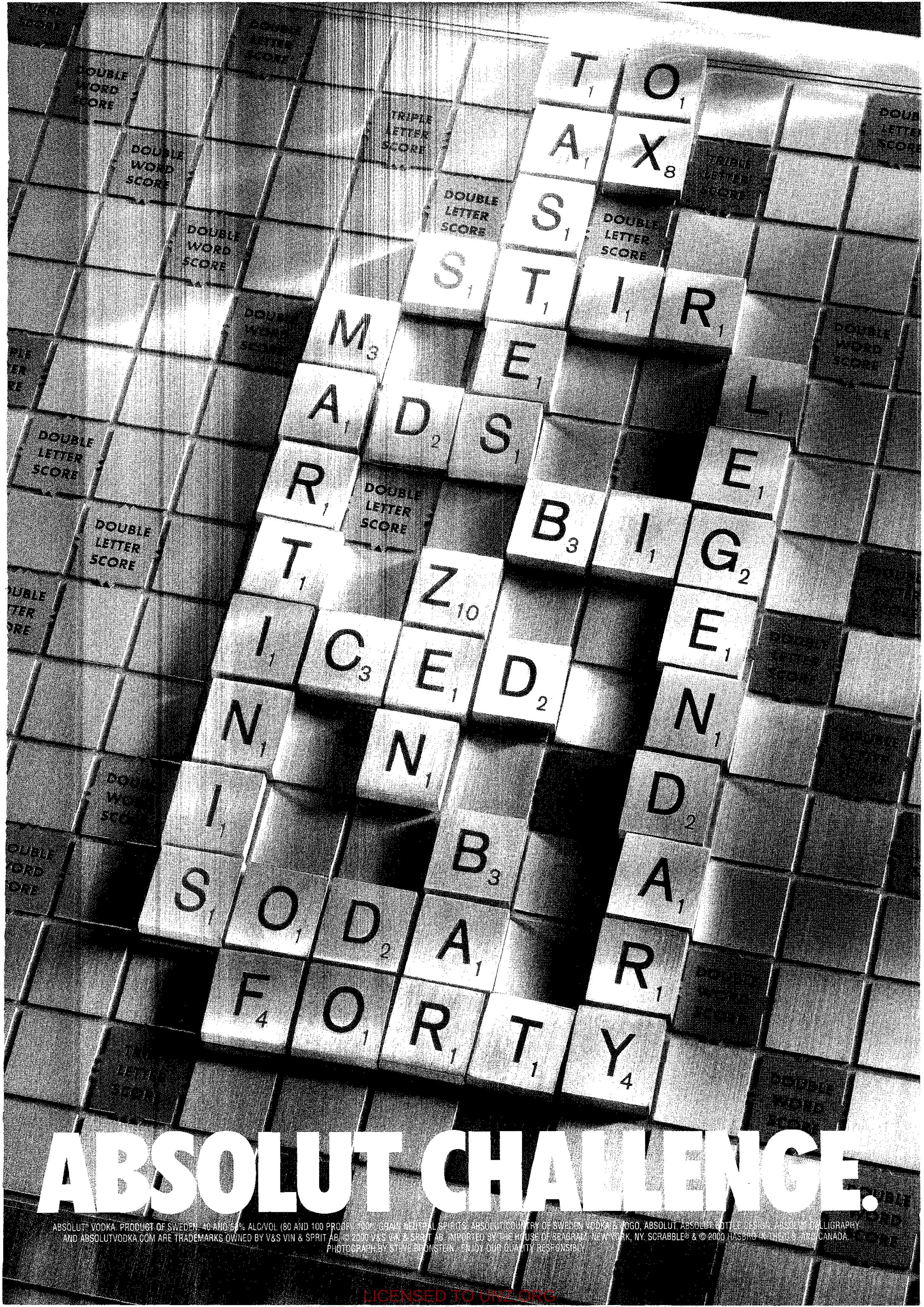
"China now says it will withdraw its opposition to the missile-defense shield if the F.B.I. builds it."

ON RELOCATION
NOT REALLY ABOUT SCHMIDT



Some weeks ago, Louis Begley, the lawyer turned novelist, received a phone call with exciting news. The film adaptation of his drawing-room satire "About Schmidt," which had been optioned for the movies not long after its publication, in 1996, was actually getting made. This was all the more surprising because Begley's books, though critically esteemed, have not been big commercial successes, and because "About Schmidt" dared to offer an unlikable protagonist—most un-Hollywood—in Albert Schmidt, a newly widowed, retired Upper East Side lawyer struggling over whether to share his house in the Hamptons with his daughter, his sole heir, who, to his chagrin, is engaged to a Jew. Best of all, as one of the movie's producers, Michael Besman, told Begley, Jack Nicholson had signed on to play Schmidt. Principal photography was about to start; a crew was already out scouting locations—in Omaha, Nebraska.

Omaha? Well, that became the story's milieu after Alexander Payne was brought in as the director and co-writer and Schmidt's line of work was changed from estate law (at a white-shoe firm not unlike Debevoise & Plimpton, where Begley has been a partner since 1968) to actuarial insurance (at a firm not unlike Mutual of Omaha). In the movie version, Schmidt will also take off across the Plains in an R.V. to find himself. Payne, a native of Omaha, shot and set two previous movies, "Citizen Ruth" and "Election," there. "I talked Louis Begley through it,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but I don't think the Omaha part was hitting him," Besman said. "Hopefully, he's O.K. about it now. He told me he likes Alexander's work. And the check cleared."

The other day, in his office, Begley, an elegant sixty-seven-year-old who survived the Nazi occupation of Poland, said he was "more bemused than anything else" by the turn the adaptation has taken. He has been a fan of Nicholson's ever since "Five Easy Pieces." "I think of him every time I go into a diner and order a chicken-salad sandwich," he said, adding that there is a gag clause in his movie-sale contract forbidding him to say anything negative about the project. "Which is fine. I don't think Schmidtie ever visited Nebraska, but it certainly would have been a broadening experience. By the way, can you tell me, what is an R.V.?"

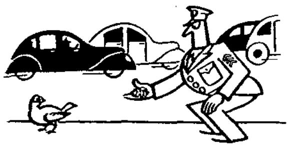
Begley said he has had no contact with anyone involved in the movie since filming began, in March. When he learned that the script had dropped the theme of anti-Semitism, he didn't mind that much, but he was sorry to see Carrie, Schmidt's twenty-year-old Puerto Rican girlfriend, written out. "That's a pity," he said. "I was in love with her character. She's responsible for a kind of rejuvenation of Schmidt. I'm surprised, because I've always thought that a Hollywood movie had to have a romantic interest." ("Ultimately, Alexander Payne has to own the material," Besman said. "And, I mean, Jack did a relationship with Jennifer Lopez already in 'Blood and Wine.' ")

As it happens, not a single scene from "About Schmidt" the book appears in "About Schmidt" the movie. The main reason is that, sometime after Payne committed to directing the project, he decided to fuse the book with a script of his own called "The Coward," which he'd begun ten years ago at U.C.L.A. film school. "The novel gave me a few things I needed—the wife dying and the daughter being about to marry a boob," Payne said recently. "Oh, and the last name of the protagonist. We changed his first name from whatever it was to Warren. Warren was better for our purposes. But, anyway, this is based much more on 'The Coward,' which was also about retirement, than on Louis Begley's novel. The book's setting is upper-class New York and Long Island, right? I thought about changing the title, but the title's great. You may have noticed that on the script it says 'Inspired by the novel by Louis Begley.' You could even say 'Suggested by.' "

Payne, who is a very young-looking forty years old, with narrow features and a palm tree of curly brown hair, said that he hopes Begley is happy with the movie, and that he would like to meet the author someday. "He doesn't hate me, does he?" he said. "In screenwriting class, they asked us, 'What do you owe the novelist?,' and the entire class would yell out in unison, 'Nothing!' Anyway, after we're finished, he could always sell the movie rights to the book again. Or maybe he could write the novelization of our movie."

—*Eric Konigsberg*

DAWN PATROL
BIRDS, DROPPING



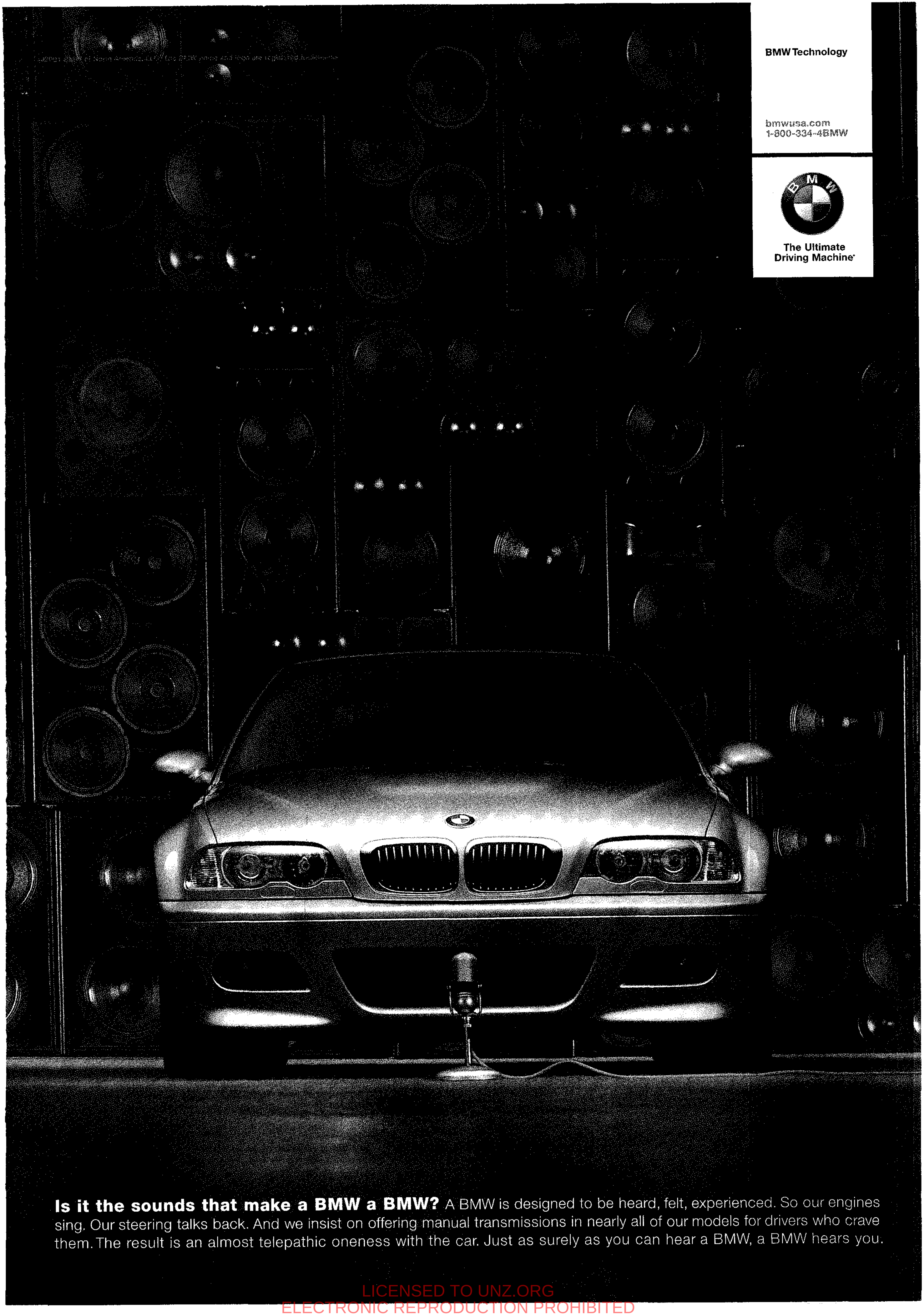
The other day, when spring bird migration was near its peak over New York City, Rebekah Creshkoff left her Upper West Side apartment before dawn and took a taxi downtown. She carried a butterfly net and two dozen brown-paper lunch bags. It was still dark when she reached the World Financial Center. She unfolded a scooter, and—with surprising liveliness for that time of morning—began zipping from one building to another, sometimes stopping to look, through binoculars, at distant objects on the ground. These often turned out to be apple cores and wadded Kleenex. But sometimes they were small birds, lying dead, with their legs in the air.

As Creshkoff made her tour (keeping close to the perimeters of the buildings, as if following the rules of a private game), she explained that migrating birds make use of the stars and the moon for navigation, and can become confused at night by tall and brightly lit buildings. This is particularly true when clouds are low and a building's lights point upward—then you have what Creshkoff called a "room of light" in the sky. Disoriented, birds will fly around and around until day breaks, and then they will find their way to any patch of green on the ground. As they take off to re-start their journey north, the migrants, unfamiliar with the weird and unforgiving solidity of glass, often fly straight into the first-floor windows of the New York Mercantile Exchange or Au Bon Pain. According to Creshkoff, "The injuries are similar to what you would experience in a car crash if you hit the windshield at thirty miles an hour."

In the past five years, Creshkoff and a few other volunteers, encouraged by her example, have recorded more than two thousand dead and injured birds at the World Financial Center and the World Trade Center. In a repeated early-morning race against rats, cats, gulls, and men with brooms, they have made several hundred rescues, and have begun to argue a case for making New York's buildings more friendly to passing warblers—that is, darker and softer. In recent months, thanks in part to Creshkoff, netting has been stretched across some of the ground-floor windows of the Twin Towers, and birds now bounce off like tennis balls. Creshkoff, who writes speeches and other internal communications at J. P. Morgan Chase, has realistic bird-policy ambitions but still daydreams about blackouts, and how much they would benefit the birds. She is the kind of person who, at the top of the Empire State Building on a clear night, surrounded by people gasping with wonder at the spectacle of the city lights, will groan, "This is so depressing. I can't stand it."

A little after five-thirty, Creshkoff saw a common yellowthroat—just a few inches long—standing quite still in front of the World Financial Center's Winter Garden, as if waiting for the place to open for business. Creshkoff crept behind the bird, silently dropped her body into a straight-backed curtsy, and scooped it up in both hands. She put it at the bottom of a brown-paper bag and closed the bag with a binder clip.

Over the next couple of hours, as the sweepers began to sweep in the World Trade Center, and as the sound of birdsong was eventually challenged



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by a public-address system playing what sounded like Kenny G., Creshkoff followed her route on the scooter, scorning pigeons ("They don't need my help") and lecturing dazed migrants: she rapped firmly on the glass of the Marriott World Trade Center Hotel and said, "Stay there. This is solid. Solid." One bird, another common yellowthroat, thumped into a window right at her feet, and came to rest on her ankle. "Oh, I feel honored," she said, before almost stepping on a dead swamp sparrow.

By seven-thirty, Creshkoff had collected four bird corpses. (After a little time in Creshkoff's freezer, they would be donated to ornithological research.)

Birds, downtown

And she had four brown lunch bags that held stunned but living birds. She carried these to the north end of Nelson A. Rockefeller Park. Away from glass, the birds were freed—they dashed under a bush. One bag had the letter "I" written on it. "That stands for injured," Creshkoff said. Then she realized she had made a mistake. "No, that was my soup. I think it was Italian vegetable."

—*Ian Parker*

AROUND GRACIE MANSION
THE BODY POLITIC

In a deft act of sixteenth-century public relations, the Genoese admiral and statesman Andrea Doria had himself painted, by Bronzino, in the character of Neptune. The portrait gave Doria license to pose wearing nothing but a cloak draped low around his loins, exposing not just his muscular arms, manly chest, and stalwart belly but, just visible above the draping folds of cloth, a quarter-inch of penis. Doria's public display of his virility came to mind last week, as Mayor Rudolph Giuliani took the unusual step of letting it be known that, owing to the drugs he has been taking to treat his prostate cancer, he is suffering from sexual impotence, among other unpleasant side effects. Giuliani is the anti-Doria: he wants to make sure we know that the only thing he's doing all night is vomiting.

The details of the Mayor's maladies may, for most onlookers, be more information than necessary; but throughout history a leader's body has always been an object of public spectacle. Until the modern era, that leader was usually a king, and the king was thought not just to represent the law of the land but, as the intermediary between God and man, to incarnate it. "The idea is that the king has the law in his own chest," R. Burr Litchfield, a professor of history at Brown University, said last week. Litchfield is the translator of a forthcoming book, "The King's Body," by Sergio Bertelli, which explains how the physical integrity of the kingdom depended on the physical integrity of the king: when the Emperor Constantine passed away while all his sons were scattered elsewhere in the Roman Empire, a crisis was avoided by having the king's court treat the body as if it were alive, making regular bowing-and-scraping visits to the chamber in which it was stored. Late-medieval jurists dealt with the inevitable frailty of the flesh by developing the theory of "the king's two bodies": the "body natural" and the "body politic," the latter enduring even after the body natural had given way. This fiction—a dodge so sophisticated that Bill Clinton might have been proud of it—sustained monarchies for centuries, until some bright revolutionary sparks decided that it might be easier to get rid of kings' bodies altogether.

No one nowadays—with the possible exception of Giuliani himself—thinks of the Mayor as the physical embodiment of the law, but it is nonetheless a curious reversal for a leader to make a public display of his bodily weakness, even if he's been advised to do so by his divorce lawyer. For kings, sexual potency was important because, in a hereditary monarchy, reproduction is important; and while our national political life seems to be increasingly running according to principles of heredity, the politics of New York City have been, thus far, pleasingly free of princelings.

Until recently, American politicians have taken great pains to conceal their pains from the public. But the confessional culture that has flourished in the past several years seems to have dispensed with that kind of discretion; in contemporary politics, the display of physical frailty is often employed as a way to gain sympathy. The most commanding figure on the current political landscape is Dick Cheney, who suffers from serious cardiovascular disease. And public sympathy for Giuliani increased last year when he announced he had cancer. "You could say this is the reversal of the king's two bodies in the age of the New Man, where being sick and limp is a political asset, rather than something that would drive a nail into your coffin," Simon Schama, the Columbia University historian, said last week. He added that there is, after all, some small precedent for physical impairment in a king signalling strength, not weakness. "If you think about Louis XIV, there was unbelievable public interest in his bum," Schama pointed out. The Sun King conducted a heroic and public struggle against an anal fistula—he underwent a hideous, well-documented operation—which was taken by the people of France as an example of his political fortitude. Giuliani can only hope for such a generous diagnosis from his public.

—*Rebecca Mead*

ready(n)

Picture this: just this second, seven new people are logging onto the Net for the first time. That's 600,000 new users every day. Assuming three devices each (desktop, palmtop, phone) and three services (email, calendar, news feeds), well, you can see where this is going. This exponential growth in users, devices and bandwidth is creating incredible new opportunities, which will place equally incredible demands on your web services infrastructure. Helping you get ready for them is what we do best. Sun technologies are built from the ground up to handle precisely this type of demand. Products that can prepare you for the exponential growth that comes from new users, traffic and services. Products that let you provide continuous uptime, even when demand can spike anytime. Products that provide an easily "integratable" environment for all your hardware, software and services and scale to the nth degree. Products that are, in short, nth ready. Now that should make you feel composed. Smile.

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THE FINANCIAL PAGE

HOLLYWOOD'S STAR SYSTEM, AT A CUBICLE NEAR YOU

Hollywood is the future. Or so we're told by the evangelists of the new world of work. Someday, they say, companies will run their businesses the way Hollywood makes movies. Companies won't have employees; they'll just move from short-term project to short-term project, assembling small groups of people, who will then disband when the work is done. Everyone will earn a hefty fee, rather than a salary. As Daniel Pink declares in "Free Agent Nation," his new manifesto, "Large permanent organizations with fixed rosters of individuals are giving way to small, flexible networks with ever-changing collections of talents." Or, more succinctly, "We're all going Hollywood."

God help us, then, because Hollywood is a rotten place to do business. Most studio films don't make money. Production and marketing costs are skyrocketing; profits are not. The best estimates of the industry's return on invested capital over the past few years put it somewhere in the neighborhood of five per cent. (Dell Computer's return, by comparison, is around three hundred and fifty-five per cent.) The studios would do about as well buying T-bills as making motion pictures.

The main problem is that Hollywood remains in thrall to a concept with tremendous cultural resonance but no real economic rationale: the primacy of the star. The star system, born in the silent era, has survived the rise of the auteur, the advent of the special-effects blockbuster, and the repeated objections of the bean counters. After all these years, movies are still primarily vehicles for stars, and actors are still the town aristocrats. But the star system, which made a lot of economic sense in its early days, has long since outlived its usefulness.

Basically, stars are paid too much. Twenty million dollars a picture is now routine, and performers often take a hefty percentage of a movie's gross, too. As a result, films are both riskier (because they're more expensive) and less rewarding (because the upside is limited). You could live with this if the stars were delivering the goods. But they're not. A comprehensive study of the star system, by the economist S. Abraham Ravid, of Rutgers, found that movies with stars in them are no more profitable than movies without stars. From an economic point of view, Hollywood should be making more small films and fewer expensive ones—especially those featuring famous, expensive actors. Even the biggest hits are, for the most part, starless. Of the fifteen top-grossing films of all time in the United States, only two—"Forrest Gump" and "The Grinch"—could really be considered star vehicles.

If paying Harrison Ford twenty million dollars doesn't improve your return on investment, why do studio executives keep doing it? For art's sake? I don't think so. In Hollywood, performance is too often measured by the crudest of metrics: box-office gross. Profitability is an afterthought. Stars may increase a movie's box-office, but it's seldom enough to outweigh the cost of their salaries.

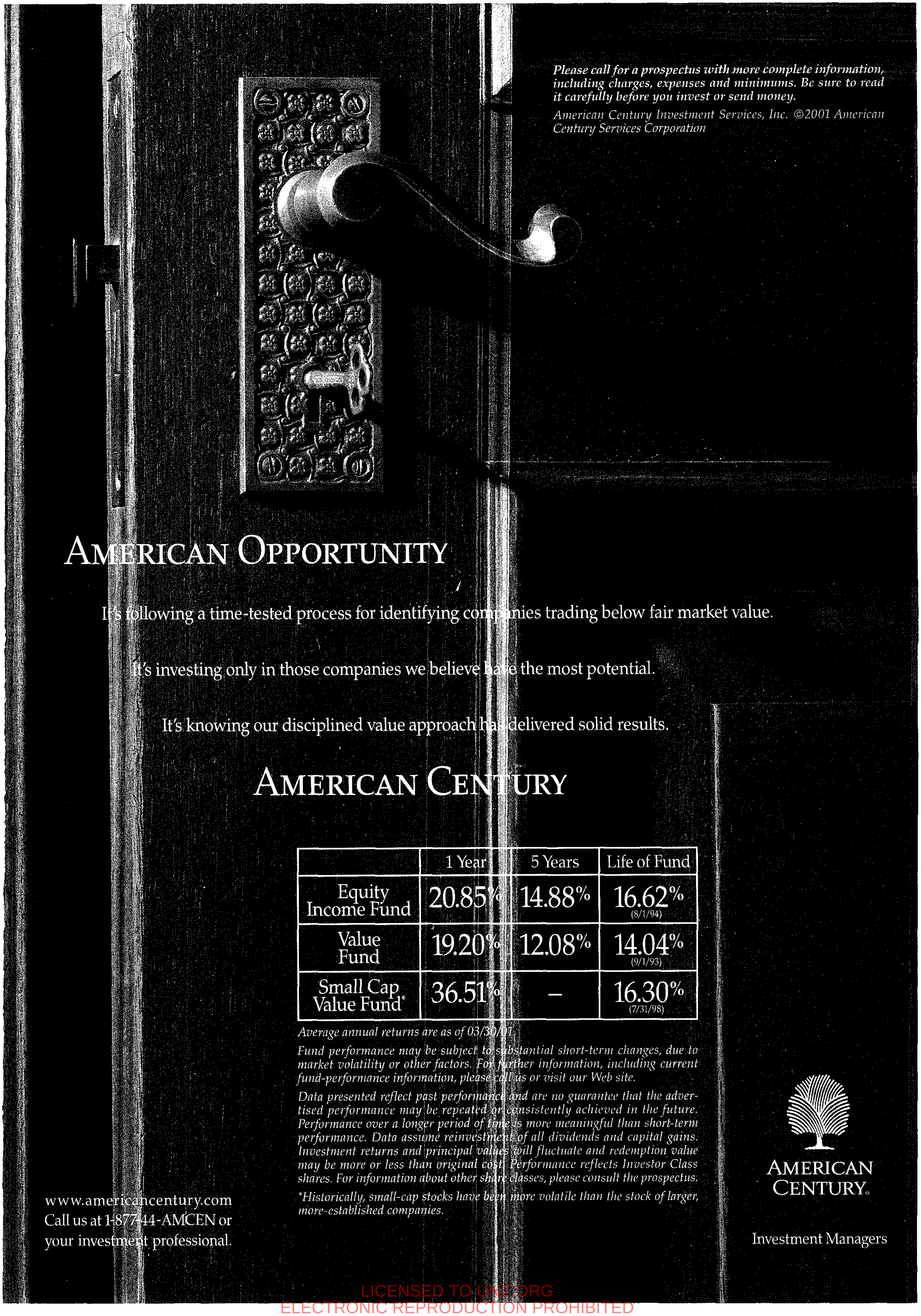
CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

Relying on stars made sense in the nineteen-thirties and forties, because they were studio employees. Under the studio system, most actors had long-term contracts with one particular studio or another. The stars were well paid, some making as much as five thousand dollars a week. But they were employees. By creating stars, the studios were looking after their own economic interests. The more famous and popular Spencer Tracy became, the better it was for M-G-M; the studio's costs didn't rise—since Tracy was under contract—but its profits soared. Now the studio pays to promote a film but ends up promoting the star, who will probably be working for someone else next time. Columbia Pictures, for instance, has spent lavishly to turn Heath Ledger into a star in order to promote "A Knight's Tale": "He will rock you," the posters read. The problem is that Ledger's next movie is being produced by Paramount and Miramax, so next year he will be rocking the competition. Not that past success reliably predicts future performance. What it predicts, if anything, is a high price tag. After "The Waterboy," New Line shelled out twenty million dollars for Adam Sandler and wound up with "Little Nicky."

Of course, the star system is common in other realms of entertainment, like professional sports. But even baseball, where the costs of free agency are widely lamented, is better off. The Texas Rangers may have overpaid to sign Alex Rodriguez, the free-agent shortstop, but he'll be a Ranger for years to come; the team doesn't have to bargain with him before every game. Hollywood isn't so fortunate. Its free agents are free as can be. This is great for the stars: they work when, and on what, they want, and get rich doing it. But it's bad for studios and their shareholders. And it's bad for the movies, since bloated budgets mean that fewer of them are made. The best thing for Hollywood would be to rein in the stars and mimic the old studio system—team producers with a stable of regular actors, writers, and directors. In other words, run it like a traditional corporation. Corporations may be out of fashion, but they work.

The motion-picture business is proof of free agency's perils, not its virtues. The very qualities that inspire would-be visionaries like Daniel Pink to want to imitate Hollywood have been its downfall. Without a cadre of in-house performers, studios lurch from movie to movie, wasting enormous amounts of time and money assembling the talent for each new project. Hollywood needs to look more like a business and less like a crapshoot. It's not the pictures that got small. It's the stars who got too big.

—*James Surowiecki*



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TIME TO KILL

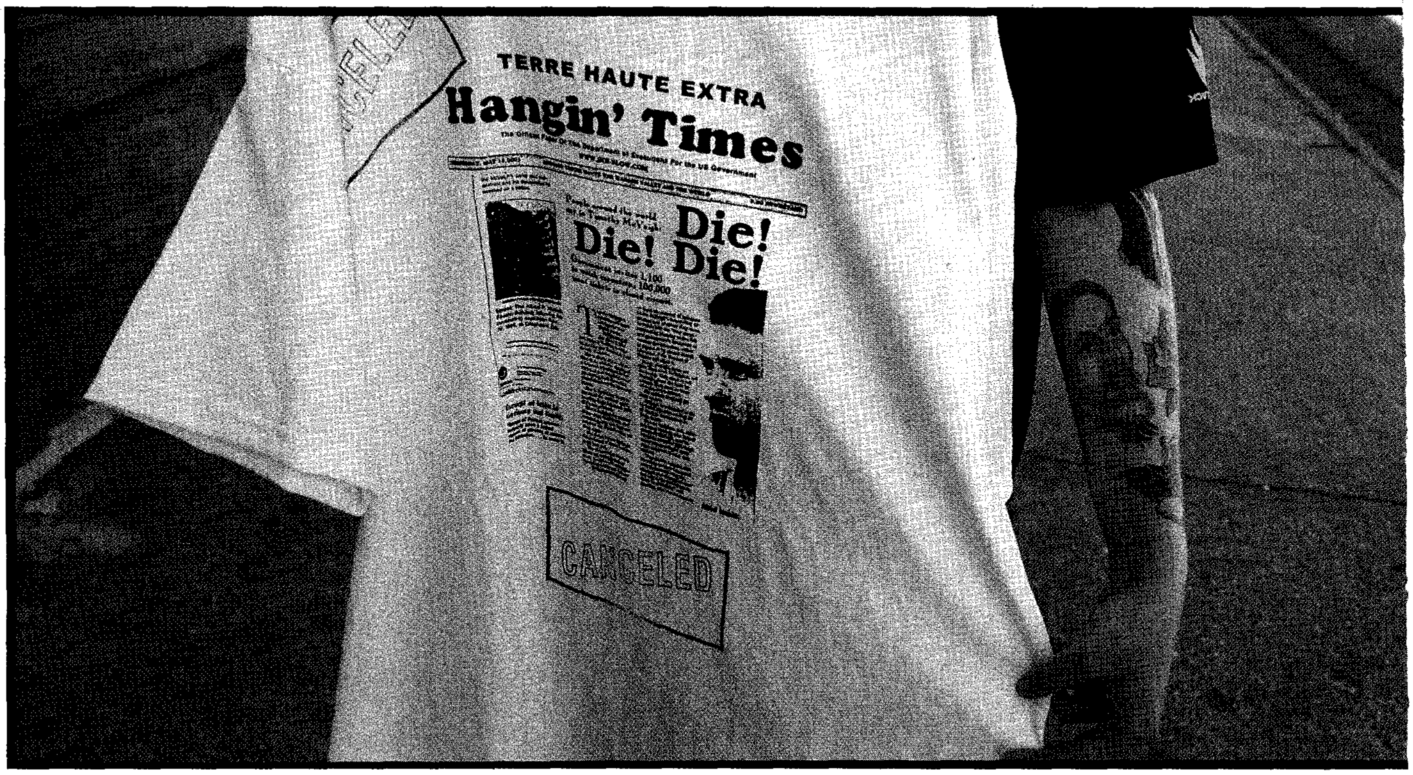
The tents are up, the crowds are ready—and still waiting.

BY MARK SINGER

TERRE HAUTE, INDIANA

It wasn't as if I'd especially been looking forward to the day of Timothy McVeigh's execution. I understand that when you decide to kill someone in a manner that's likely to attract a large crowd, you want things to proceed smoothly and so you plan ahead. (McVeigh himself had certainly done that when he murdered a hundred and sixty-eight people in Oklahoma City on April 19, 1995.) Still, many of the ground rules devised for the ceremonies in Terre Haute, Indiana, struck me as gratuitously onerous. Leaving nothing to chance—except, of course, the is-this-a-great-country-or-what possibility that the prospective executee's arch-nemesis, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, would disgrace itself in the eleventh hour with a revelation of incompetence worthy of the Department of Motor Vehicles—the Federal Bureau of Prisons had scripted McVeigh's farewell with an inflexible specificity that even the most exacting anal compulsives could marvel at. The micromanaging extended well beyond the fifty-one-page "Execution Protocol," which delineated the killing ritual in language intended to reassure taxpayers that they were getting their money's worth: "The Warden will then advise the Designated United States Marshal that, 'We are ready.' A prearranged signal will then be given by the Designated United States Marshal to the Warden, who will direct the executioner(s) to administer the lethal injection." Fine. But what about those of us for whom the logistical dictates were a source of personal inconvenience? Whose idea was it, anyway, to inject McVeigh with potassium chloride at seven o'clock in the morning?

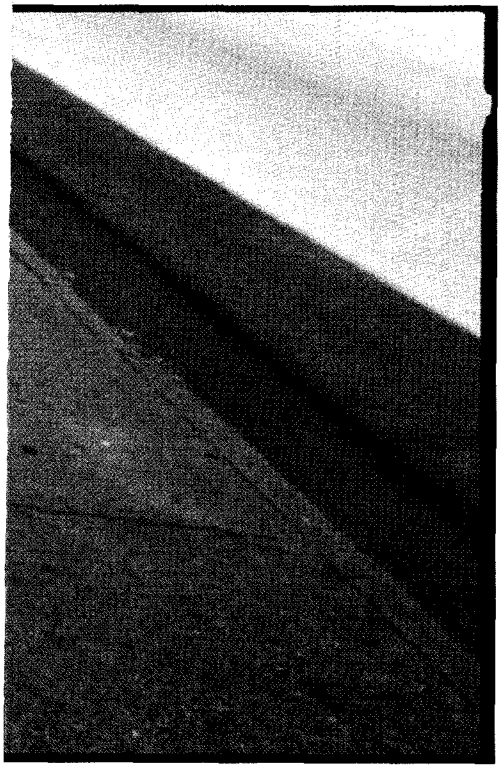
Eight days before the execution date (and three days before it was postponed), the Bureau of Prisons set up a media-registration center on the first floor of the Terre Haute Holiday Inn and began distributing press credentials—a laminated plastic "Media Center Official Press Pass," to be worn on a nickel-chain necklace along with a photo I.D. Even if what McVeigh called the "suicide-by-cop deluxe package" had been delivered to him as originally scheduled, these were patently worthless party favors. The press pass would allow access not to the confines of the U.S. penitentiary but to a precisely demarcated ghetto almost a half mile outside its razor-wire-topped fences. From that vantage point, a very limited range of options would be available. A camera equipped with a telephoto lens could capture static images of the brown brick exterior of the federal lockup, but nothing about those images would particularize that an execution was taking place inside. With or without a camera, one could interview pro- and anti-death-penalty advocates who would gather on-site. The opposing groups would be separated from each other and cordoned within plastic-fenced zones a few hundred yards from the main media-briefing tent. No one could predict how many demonstrators would show up in Terre Haute, but it seemed likely that they would be far outnumbered by mem-



"It's not something we chose," the Mayor said before Timothy McVeigh's death was delayed. "We're trying to put a positive spin on the

bers of the Fourth Estate. Under the circumstances, representatives of the press would be reduced, as is inevitably the case in such situations, to interviewing each other. Many of the requisite components of an American-macabre extravaganza would be assembled, but what the audience lusted after would be hidden from view, rather like a Roman Colosseum frolic in which the arena remains empty until a herald arrives with the news that the lion, offstage, has enjoyed his meal.

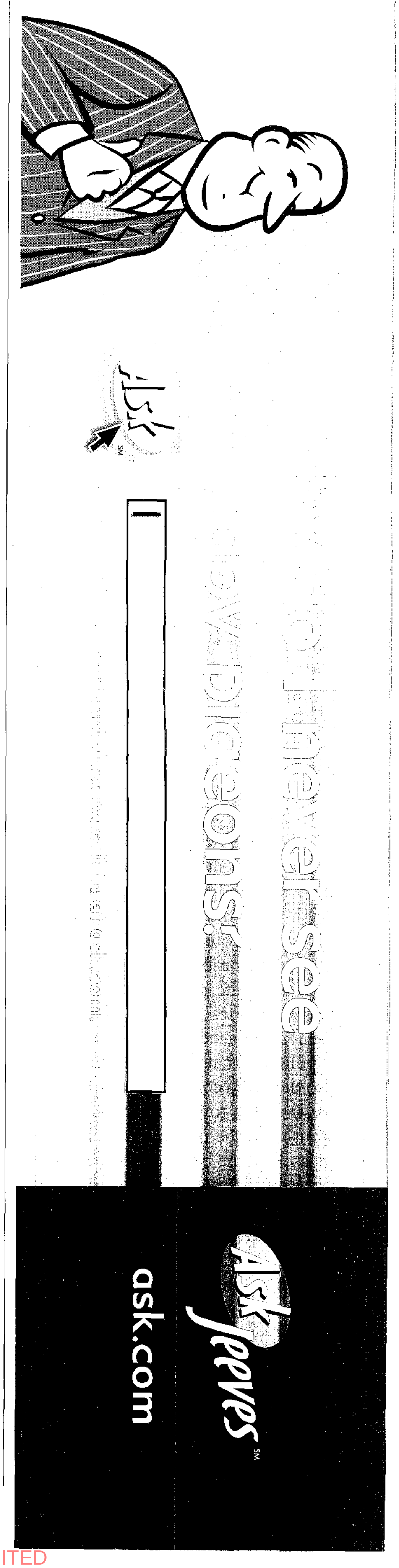
When I claimed my press credentials at the Holiday Inn—by then, I'd already been domiciled on the fourth floor for several days, testing the hypothesis that a life sentence in tight quarters in Terre Haute was sufficient punishment for any crime—I volunteered to be a media-pool representative in the execution witness room. Ten of the twenty-five witness slots were allocated to the press, two to the "print media." Gore Vidal, it turned out, had come by his reserved seat not because he would be reporting on the event for *Vanity Fair* but because the soon-to-be-deceased was allowed to invite five guests. I was curious when I first heard that Vidal and the most homicidal man in America were acquaintances; a by-product, perhaps, of a shared enthusiasm for the novels of Dawn Powell? Not quite. Actually, they'd become pen pals after Vidal published, in 1998, an intermittently coherent essay alleging a general assault by the federal government upon the Bill of Rights, an argument McVeigh found philosophically compatible with his own beliefs—the same beliefs that to this day undergird his nauseating certitude that bombing the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building was the right thing to do.



activities." Photograph by Sylvia Plachy.

As for the rest of us scribblers, the Bureau of Prisons had mandated, "The method for choosing or selecting press pool witnesses is a matter that is completely determined by those media representatives involved in the selection process." So we would settle this among ourselves, no doubt in a spirit reminiscent of "Lord of the Flies." I probably stood a better chance of winning the Powerball lottery, but I would never have forgiven myself if I failed to make the effort to be an eyewitness to a historic event for which—assuming that one believed the assurances of Attorney General John Ashcroft—no visual record would be preserved. The dreadful part was that the selection process would take place at 4 A.M. To be present, one would have to arrive an hour or so earlier at an off-site location and then be transported to the prison outskirts by shuttle bus. The net result would be little or no bed rest on the eve of the execution. In that regard, I shared McVeigh's resentment of the federal government's heavy hand. When, deus ex machina, the F.B.I. disrupted millions of people's ardent expectations, I appraised the upside: at least we could all sleep in.

Amid all this, one still felt, constantly and acutely, for the victims' families, the survivors, and the citizens of Oklahoma City, who were so desperate to blot McVeigh out of their consciousness and who would now have this chapter of their nightmare prolonged for weeks, or possibly months or years. The mood in Terre Haute, however, ran more toward exasperation than aggrieved outrage. What these two communities, six hundred and fifty miles apart, had in common—besides their flat landscapes and their deep familiarity with the trappings of the homogenized Middle American quotidian—was the arbitrariness with which they had become settings in the twisted chronicle



"Hey, I'm just happy to be making an obscene amount of money."

• •

of McVeigh's twisted existence. Before electing to ruin thousands of lives in Oklahoma, McVeigh had pondered potential targets in Arizona, Arkansas, Missouri, Texas, and Washington, D.C. Oklahoma City was an erstwhile oil boomtown and cowtown, the capital of a state distinguished by the fact that, during its relatively brief history—Oklahoma joined the Union less than a century ago—events of national consequence tended not to occur there. McVeigh fixed that. Passively, Oklahoma City had become defined as The Place That Got Bombed.

Terre Haute, meanwhile, had enjoyed several decades of civic satisfaction as the home of a federal penitentiary with a population that now numbers almost two thousand convicts. During the Depression, the town fathers lobbied vigorously for the prison to be built there because of the hundreds of permanent jobs it would create. The first occupants arrived in 1940. In 1994, the United States criminal code was expanded to include several new categories of misdeeds punishable by death. The last federal execution, in 1963, was accomplished by hanging, an untidy method no longer in vogue. The official explanation from the Bureau of Prisons was that Terre Haute's central location made it an ideal home for the country's only state-of-the-art federal execution apparatus; after all, the town called itself "The Crossroads of America." People in Terre Haute claim not to be pleased to have achieved celebrity in this fashion, not even the majority that supports capital punishment in general and the extermination of McVeigh in particular. On the other hand, there's no question that the prospect of his unnatural demise has been good for business.

During a press briefing a week before the proceedings got put on hold, the mayor, Judy Anderson, was asked how she felt about her city's moment in the international spotlight.

"It's not something we chose, but because it's going to happen we're trying to put a positive spin on the activities that will take place here," said the Mayor, a gracious lady in her late fifties. "We want people who come here, most of whom will be leaving and not returning, to know that this is a beautiful, friendly city. We're on the Wabash River, we have lovely parks. We want visitors to go away feeling that the people they've met here are polite, friendly, and helpful. We want you to go away knowing that we personally feel that the penitentiary is a very good partner of our community. The death chamber just happens to be part of that facility."

Previously, Mayor Anderson had told the *Times*, when asked about the prospect that souvenir venders would be hawking T-shirts and buttons, "We have no control over what they sell. We're just asking that it be in very good taste." After the press briefing, I visited a tattoo and body-piercing parlor in central Terre Haute, where commemorative T-shirts were priced at twenty bucks. The most popular item showed the front page of a mock newspaper, the *Hangin' Times*, with a photograph of McVeigh under the headline "DIE MOTHERFUCKER DIE!"

The Mayor was not alone in confronting a daunting spin-control challenge. One afternoon, I drove to the town of Bloomfield, southeast of Terre Haute, for an appointment with Roger Stalcup, the brigadier general of the Southern Indiana Regional Militia, which consists of twenty county militias with a combined membership, according to Stalcup, of more than a thousand people. The government's investigation of McVeigh placed him and his co-conspirator, Terry Nichols, at militia meetings in the vicinity of the Nichols family farm, in Michigan. It was one thing to agree with McVeigh that the odious forces of gun control posed a grave threat to the sacrosanct Second Amendment. However, McVeigh's shrill rhetoric—inspired by William L. Pierce's "The Turner Diaries," an anti-Semitic novel whose protagonist bombs the F.B.I. headquarters in Washington—proved a bit much for the folks in Michigan, and he never officially joined a militia. Nevertheless, in the aftermath of Oklahoma City, militia groups everywhere, never popular to begin with, became the object of greatly increased hostility.

For someone like Stalcup, a forty-nine-year-old family man and professional bail-enforcement agent ("It's a fancy term for bounty hunter"), everything connected to McVeigh was anathema. We met at a Dairy Queen. Stalcup had brought along his wife, Janice, and their daughter, Sarah, a twelve-year-old who looked like her mother—round-faced, with a brunet pageboy haircut—but was dressed like her father, in jeans and a camouflage jacket. Sarah, who told me that she wants to be an Army drill sergeant when she grows up, is the commander of her county youth militia.

I'd heard about Stalcup from a German public-television crew that had gone to see him a couple of days earlier—a visit that, all agreed, had not been worth-

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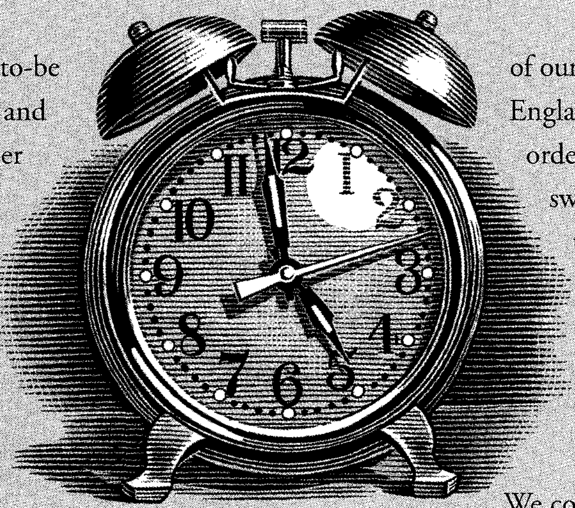

Not long ago, a bride-to-be in South Carolina called and asked if we would give her a wake-up call at 5 a.m. Seems the mansion-turned-hotel where she was staying didn't offer that courtesy, and she didn't want to be late for her wedding. Naturally, we obliged.

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while. "The Germans tried to talk us into bringing out some automatic rifles and handguns and demonstrating them on camera," Stalcup complained. "That's something we wouldn't do ordinarily and certainly wouldn't consider when we're right on the verge of the McVeigh execution and people are in a panic as it is. Even though all our weapons are perfectly legal and we have nothing to hide. Some people just associate guns with evil, and they don't understand the whole story."

Our conversation made detours into topics like the Antichrist and the spectre of one world government, but there were moments when, if I closed my eyes, I might have fancied I was chatting with an Upper West Side liberal. Stalcup was opposed to capital punishment—"I've never been for the death penalty, because there's a lot of flaws in the justice system. Look at all the DNA evidence that has set people free"—and he assumed that McVeigh's execution would backfire. "There are several more radical fringe groups out there, and we're giving them one more date on the calendar to do something," he said, echoing the compelling logic that locking McVeigh away for life would deprive him of the capacity for martyrdom.

"The way I see capital punishment, two wrongs don't make a right," said Sarah, demonstrating the thoroughness of her political indoctrination.

"We're one of the few nations in the world that has capital punishment," her father added. "What's that say about us?"

Us. In principle, all of us have a stake in the decision to take or spare McVeigh's life, a binary choice with uncountable caveats. Those among us who want McVeigh to be executed—a group that includes many who profess a belief in forgiveness—insist that the motivation isn't revenge but justice. It's really quite simple: he did it to us and so we're entitled to do it to him.

And he did do it. From the get-go, he had admitted his guilt to his lawyers. He told them the story again and again, until the tale didn't so much leak as hemorrhage to the newspapers before his trial. Convicted, condemned to death, done with his appeals, he guided his biographers step by step through the epic of his transfiguration, explicating without remorse how and when and why.

A week before the execution date, a combination of reportorial and homing instincts drew me from Terre Haute to Oklahoma City. I grew up in Oklahoma in the nineteen-fifties and sixties, left after high school, and returned to live there for a couple of years in the early eighties, renting a house in Oklahoma City a mile from ground zero. Two or three times a week, I used to run on an indoor track at the Y.M.C.A., diagonally across the street from the Murrah Building. For my literary purposes, Oklahoma had usually served as a comic foil, an endearing, amusing, anthropologically rich subculture that I understood as well as any. The bombing catastrophe didn't fit into any narrative around which I could wrap my imagination or my treasured sense of where I came from.

Which is why, until my most recent visit, I had avoided going near the bomb site. When I finally forced myself to take a look, the sobering reward was a stunningly well-conceived memorial museum and park that fill two square blocks downtown. A pair of two-story polished bronze walls, separated by a reflecting pool, stand at each end of the park: on one is engraved "9:01" and on the other "9:03"—the moments before and after the explosion. Arranged on a gently sloping lawn alongside the reflecting pool are the now famous hundred and sixty-eight empty chairs. I spent two hours there, during which, it later occurred to me, I thought about the lives of the dead and not at all about McVeigh. Then I got into my car and drove a hundred miles north, to Enid, to the office of Stephen Jones, the lead defense lawyer during McVeigh's trial.

Jones occupies a position very high on the list of McVeigh's least favorite people. Lou Michel and Dan Herbeck, the authors of the best-selling "American Terrorist," who spent seventy-five hours interviewing McVeigh, have written that one of the reasons he agreed to talk with them was that he had become "enraged" by Jones. The dispute between Attorney Jones and his former client boiled down to this: McVeigh insisted that he was the brains, brawn, and guts behind the planning, building, and detonation of the bomb; Jones asserted that McVeigh was a dedicated soldier in a terrorist scheme arranged and financed by . . . um, well, exactly who remains a mystery. In 1998, Jones published his own book, "Others Unknown," and it was decidedly not a best-seller. The title was drawn from the government's original indictment of McVeigh and the weak-willed Nichols, which referred to "others unknown" who might have aided and abetted their crimes. The most sought-after phantom co-conspirator was "John Doe No. 2," whom some witnesses—most notably the three employees of the Ryder truck-rental agency in Kansas where McVeigh picked up the vehicle used to transport the bomb—reported having seen in the company of "John Doe No. 1," a.k.a. McVeigh. In his book, Jones described an early meeting with his client during which he asked, point-blank, "Mr. McVeigh, who is John Doe No. 2?" and McVeigh replied, "John Doe No. 2 doesn't exist." This was not the answer Jones wanted to hear.

While not absolutely opposed to capital punishment, Jones didn't favor it in McVeigh's case—or any other case, presumably, in which he was the attorney of record. Confident that the line of defense McVeigh had urged him to pursue—that it was necessary to bomb the Murrah Building to prevent the federal government from perpetrating future Ruby Ridges or Wacos—was a guaranteed loser, he settled for an equally doomed red-herring strategy. As a court-appointed counsel, Jones succeeded in globe-trotting, on the government's dime, to the Philippines, Israel, England, Syria, and Hong Kong, an odyssey predicated upon the existence of an international intrigue involving John Doe No. 2 and others unknown. Nothing emerged, however, to illuminate anyone's understanding of the bombing beyond what the prosecutors, the twelve jurors, and McVeigh himself have agreed upon.

Jones is an intelligent, if rather pompous, fellow whose conduct in the McVeigh case has tarnished his previously respectable reputation, and I doubt that he genuinely doubts that McVeigh essentially acted alone. We had been having a cordial conversation for an hour and half—not so much about the case per se as about McVeigh's imminent extinction—when he received a phone call alerting him that CBS News had just reported that the F.B.I., five years too late,

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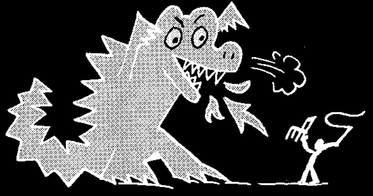

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CROWN BUSINESS

Insights from *The Change Monster* by Jeanie Daniel Duck

INTRODUCTION

The Change Monster is my catch-all phrase for the complex, sometimes scary, human emotions and social dynamics that emerge like a dragon surfacing from the ocean depths during any major change effort. Mergers, reorganizations, transformations all involve people, and that means emotions worn on the sleeve (or hidden, which is even worse) and egos on the loose. Ironically — and in some cases, tragically — many leaders involved in change would much prefer to ignore the people issues altogether. That's why I wrote *The Change Monster* — to talk about the emotional and behavioral aspects of the people and organizations involved in change, a subject that has been too long unaddressed. Those leaders who do think about people issues tend to simplify them, brand them as "personnel" issues, and quickly hand them over to the folks in Human Resources. A few wise souls recognize that the human issues are both deep and important, but make the assumption that there is little of nothing to be done about them.

What I do in this book is prepare you for the realities of living through major change, so once you're into it you'll be less likely to lose heart, go crazy, give up, bail out, or think you're the only one on the planet ever to have felt so worn out and beaten up by trying to make change happen.

STAGNATION

Getting people to recognize Stagnation becomes more difficult when a workforce that is in denial is coupled with a group of leaders who are loath to declare the bad news. Nobody likes being the bearer of bad news, but some executives hate it so much they simply won't do it. Their excuse is that they don't want to demotivate the workforce. This idea that "If I don't tell them, they won't know" just doesn't cut it.

* * * *

I met with Ray's staff and told them what I heard from them, and what Ray and I had discussed. After a brief discussion, Ray joined the group and talked about his reactions to my feedback. He reviewed specific events, his reactions, and his assessment of himself. He then outlined what he would and would not change, and how he would go about it. You could have heard a pin drop on the carpet during his presentation! This was an unprecedented, gutsy move for a boss to discuss his own behavior and commit to change in front of his subordinates. Ray then asked his staff for help, giving examples of the support he needed, and asked them to hold him accountable. The staff was astonished by Ray's candor, but also engaged by it and the task of finding new ways of working together.

PREPARATION

Many leaders are reluctant to use the available channels of communication broadly during Preparation, because of their belief that they don't have any "new news." But often, how the leaders or task team members define news is very different from how the rest of the organization defines it. Instead of focusing only on what has been decided, it might be easier to discuss what process is being used, who is involved, what's been learned or even what ideas have been discarded.

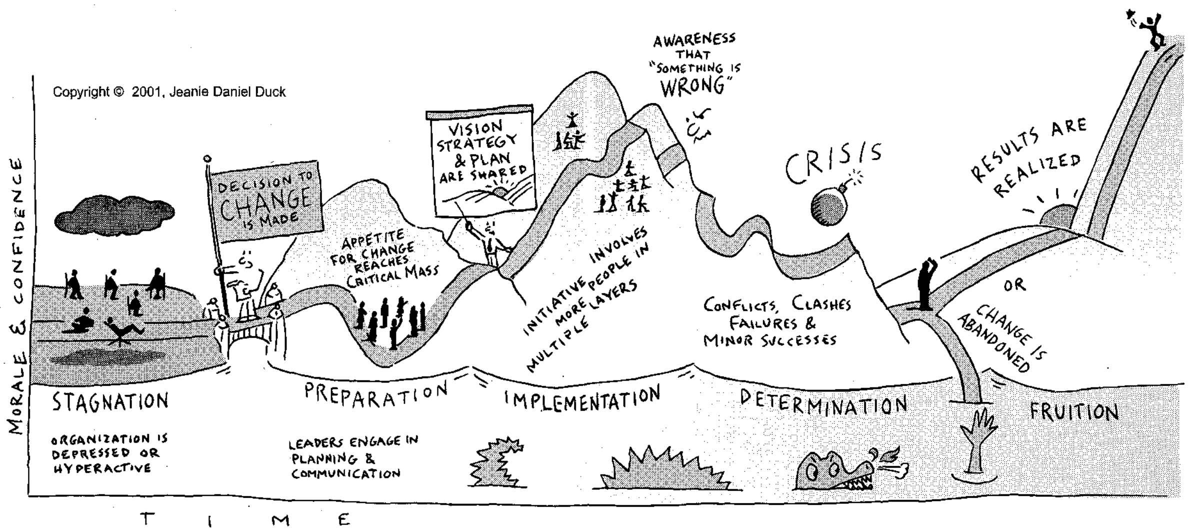
Too often, however, the leaders are so wrapped up in the issues of running the business that they fail to recognize the importance of communication; they say too little and often say it too late. One thing you should count on: people will connect the dots in the most pathological way possible. In the absence of communication from the leaders, the organization will seek information from other sources - whether those sources know what they're talking about or not. Your silence doesn't stop the conversation; it just means you're not participating in it.

* * * *

The lesson: go slow early to go fast later. Take the time to prepare the organization for change. Resist the urge to "just do it" or the doing it will be tougher than it needs to be. Instead, relish your period of hopeful anxiety; it will be a source of energy throughout the change to come.

IMPLEMENTATION

The challenge of Implementation is to form new habits. Today, there is a popular notion that admitting you have a problem is almost the equivalent of solving it. Clearly, if you don't admit there is a problem you won't be able to solve it — that's the challenge of Stagnation. But anyone who has ever tried to replace a bad habit with a good one will tell you that solving a problem, especially one requiring new thinking and actions, takes a lot of work. When you are trying to implement all the changes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MORALE & CONFIDENCE
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APPETITE FOR CHANGE REACHES CRITICAL MASS
VISION STRATEGY & PLAN ARE SHARED
AWARENESS THAT "SOMETHING IS WRONG"
INITIATIVE INVOLVES MORE PEOPLE IN MULTIPLE LAYERS
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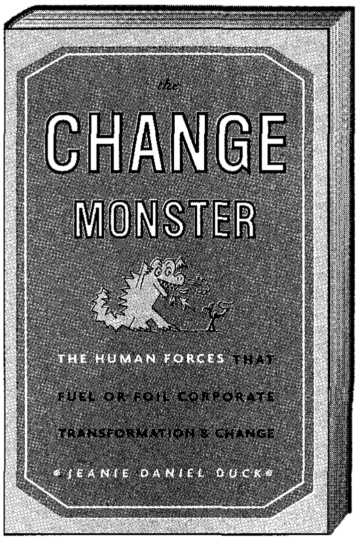
RESULTS ARE REALIZED
OR
CHANGE IS ABANDONED
STAGNATION
ORGANIZATION IS DEPRESSED OR HYPERACTIVE
PREPARATION
LEADERS ENGAGE IN PLANNING & COMMUNICATION
IMPLEMENTATION
DETERMINATION
FRUITION

required, remember that it takes a lot of practice and explicit effort to create new habits.

DETERMINATION

Then, at some point, they begin to realize that they must actually live and work in this new world. And that is when Determination sets in. The emotional and behavioral issues are the ones that can prove to be the deadliest, because leaders often misdiagnose them or see them as trivial or temporary. But ignoring concerns and feelings won't make them go away, and discounting their importance is likely to inflame the sore places rather than soothe them. Often, the leaders do not recognize that the organization is in the monster's grip until they are just about to declare victory, or have already done so.

When leaders display a self-centered sense of reality, or make inaccurate assumptions, it is rarely because they are unintelligent, uncommitted, or uncaring. Generally it is because they do not have enough vertical contact within the organization or enough time to stay in touch —- they simply are unconnected. Most leaders recognize the value of being connected with people at every level and of getting unfiltered information, but very few know how to make it happen without investing more time than they feel they have available.



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Staying involved for the many months needed to push an organization through a major transition takes a tremendous physical and emotional toll on the change leaders.

Executives, however, seem to think they can run the corporate equivalent of the Iron Man Triathlon without paying much attention to their mental, emotional or physical conditioning. I've often mused that brilliance is a terrific characteristic for the executive who is going to lead an organization through a major transition — but persistence and stamina are the true essentials. Many executives reserve time for exercise — running or basketball or work-outs of one type or another. But, in most corporate settings, it's taboo to talk about emotional needs; a strong will is often mistaken for mental toughness. Studies of people who go through periods of high stress have shown that those with a strong sup*port system fare much better than those who try to make it on a* strong will.

No one expects to take care of the Leaders. They must take care of themselves. Thus, one of the critical job skills of leaders is knowing how to give, receive, and ask for emotional support. When we look at the emotional toll leadership can take, we realize that trusted relationships are of bedrock importance. Rather than seeing personal or family time as something to be sacrificed during the transition, it becomes a stabilizing force that keeps the leaders nourished and grounded.

FRUITION

For change to be real and long-lasting it has to take place deeply and completely — emotionally, intellectually, and operationally. If the Change Leaders fail to address all three dimensions, and often the emotional aspect is the most intense aspect during Determination, neither they nor the initiatives they are leading will reach their full potential. If they do achieve change in all three dimensions, they will emerge — in the Fruition phase — as better individuals, better leaders, and as members of a far better organization.

ABOUT JEANIE DANIEL DUCK

Sometimes, because we fail to make a connection between our personal experience of change and a corporate change, we do not allow our personal experience to inform our business experience. Many of us shy away from introspection or are too busy to examine our own lives very deeply. Besides, we're so close to the change, it's difficult, if not impossible, to see it objectively or clearly. I remember, for example, the moment I decided to end the Stagnation of my first marriage and to begin preparing myself to be a single mother.

After all the divorce papers were signed, Jennifer and I left St. Louis one early December morning and headed for my parents' home in Alabama. Everything we owned was packed into a borrowed car. I felt a bit like the Beverly Hillbillies, except I had a lot less stuff than they did. As I drove, my feelings took turns: relief, hope, fear, sadness, anger, excitement and worry. That time in my parents' house was a kind of Preparation phase for me. That period of adjusting to the ending of the marriage and the beginning of a new phase, then planning, visioning, and setting new objectives was crucial — even though I'm sure I didn't define it that way.

One day, Implementation began with a bang. Mama informed me that I had gotten a call from the First National Bank of Birmingham and they expected me to be at an interview for a new training position in exactly thirty minutes. I didn't have enough time to get home, change clothes, and get back to the bank. My only option was to go as I was — in a housedress, with dirty hair and no makeup.

I met with the vice-president, whose first question was, "Do you always dress this way?" "No," I said calmly, and explained the circumstances of the morning. (I didn't mention that I usually looked worse. I was doing a lot of sculpting at that time, and spent my days in jeans, covered with plaster of Paris.) We moved on to my qualifications and I whipped out my recommendation from Pratt.

The interview went well and, after a while, the VP went away for a few minutes. When he came back, he said, "Come back in an hour to meet the Chairman of the Board." I agreed, even though I didn't know what a Chairman of the Board was. The only one I had ever heard of was Frank Sinatra, and I knew he wouldn't be there.

* * * *

I would never have pursued a business career if I hadn't been forced into it by my divorce. It had never occurred to me that business challenges could be exhilarating, or that I would find such fulfillment in working outside the home. Perhaps I had had very little self-awareness. None of us knows how we will respond to a great change in our lives until we face it.

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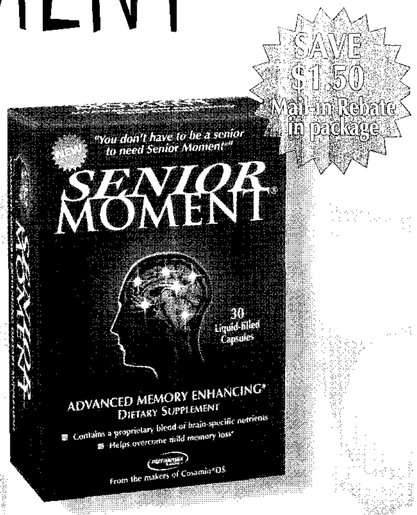
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had delivered to McVeigh's appellate attorneys more than three thousand pages of field reports from their investigation of the bombing. Then a receptionist entered the wood-panelled office—the only room in Enid, Oklahoma, decorated with autographed pictures of Richard Nixon, Nelson Rockefeller, Dan Rather, and Yasir Arafat, as well as a portrait of the Virgin Mary that once hung in Timothy McVeigh's grandfather's home—and handed Jones a dozen urgent phone messages. Whereupon he got to work doing what he most enjoys, uttering quotable quotes.

Between calls, I asked what he made of this development. "I must honestly say that I'm not surprised," he replied. "We argued before and during the trial that we hadn't received the discovery material we were entitled to. What's not clear is what's in this new material. We don't know that it exculpates McVeigh. All we know is that they were supposed to give it to us and they didn't."

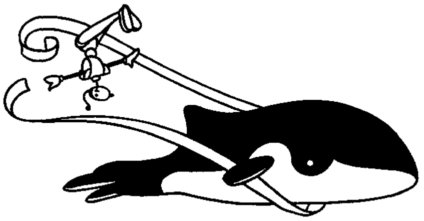
The collateral damage, to use McVeigh's pet phrase, from the F.B.I.'s blunder was certainly not that the moldering field reports would prove exculpatory—his confession obviated the possibility of a new trial—but that it would serve the agendas of other obstreperous enemies of the so-called "federal juggernaut." Staggering ineptitude, inevitably, would be exploited as proof of sinister behavior. Twenty minutes later, as I drove back toward Oklahoma City, I turned on the radio and there was Jones, bloviating. He popped up again and again over the next few days, enjoying himself at the expense of both McVeigh and the numbskull feds. During an appearance on "Larry King Live," he heard another guest, Gore Vidal, pronounce "Others Unknown" a "marvellous book." It is, in fact, just the opposite—tendentious, self-serving, bloated with irrelevant details that bespeak its lack of substance. Worst of all, it is a dangerous book, because it encourages all the right-wing lunatic conspiracists out there who insist that the bombing was a plot hatched by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (the diabolical co-authors of the Waco disaster) and that McVeigh was a patsy. The most entertaining of these future supermarket-tabloid fantasies is the notion that whoever gets the lethal injection in Terre Haute, whenever that should come to pass, won't actually be McVeigh but an even more unfortunate patsy. McVeigh, it seems, will be granted a new identity, which means we have McVeigh-at-large sightings to look forward to. No doubt he'll be travelling with Elvis.

The last person I spoke with in Oklahoma City had had as good an opportunity as anyone to crawl inside McVeigh's mind. Dr. John R. Smith is a psychiatrist who, at Jones's request, rendered an opinion of McVeigh's fitness to stand trial. In the spring and early summer of 1995, he conducted twenty-one hours of psychotherapy with McVeigh and found him, he told me, "competent, depressed but not psychotic" and "fully aware" of what he was doing when he planned and carried out the bombing. (Our conversation was permissible because McVeigh had previously waived the doctor-patient privilege, allowing Dr. Smith to be interviewed by Michel and Herbeck, the authors of "American Terrorist.") We met at his house—three blocks from my old house—in a comfortably furnished living room with louvred windows, one of which had shattered when the bomb exploded.

Who, I asked Dr. Smith, is Timothy McVeigh?

"A young man who is both child and man," he said, "and who has, as Gore Vidal says, a sense of justice. But it's misguided. He probably should have lived in the eighteenth century. He's so identified with some of the Founding Fathers and the Constitution, the warriors of old, that he believes he's going to save this country. Mostly he's just a human being who made some decisions that caused a lot of pain and suffering to people for reasons that seemed right to him at the time. He stood up for his ideals, but in a way that no one who is decent could agree with."

What were the causal links between the events of McVeigh's white-bread suburban upbringing and the moment he lit the fuses of his seven-thousand-pound bomb? It was a less than ideal boyhood—his parents quarrelled, separated, reconciled, and eventually divorced, and during his adolescence his mother disappeared from his life. At school, he was picked on by bullies, but he also made some friends. (A slightly dubious authority, Ted Kaczynski, the Unabomber, with whom McVeigh was incarcerated for a year in Colorado, wrote a letter to Michel and Herbeck that included a testimonial to McVeigh's "excellent social skills.") In any event, Dr. Smith agreed with McVeigh's own assessment that "he didn't blow up the building because of the effects of the divorce."



Indeed, it's safe to say that we all knew children who were bullied at school or whose parents divorced, and who yet managed to avoid becoming mass murderers. What made McVeigh different? Wasn't the quality of our horrified fascination with McVeigh rooted in our recognition that he was both the personification of evil and one of us? The German television producer who had led me to the militia family made a similar observation: "As a German, I know that they're still talking about the monstrosity of the crime committed in my country. And the size of McVeigh's crime—the number killed—is why people are talking about it. But in my opinion there's more to it. The American sense of security was compromised. Had it been an Arab, a Chinese, a German, it would have been a matter of 'Oh, *they* do that, those kind of people.' But how could an American do that?"

What happened to McVeigh, Dr. Smith believed, was this: When he was a small child, his parents' squabbles, audible on the other side of his bedroom wall, transformed into frightening monsters, which he combatted with superhero fantasies derived from his imagination and, later, from comic books. The schoolyard bullies were also monsters. When he was very young, his paternal grandfather introduced him to guns, and having weapons enabled him to cope with his fears. Later, gun-control activists enraged him by threatening to take away his constitutional rights as well as his psychological armor. As a young adult, he graduated from comic books to texts like "The Turner Diaries," in which the federal government assumed the role of bullying monster. Ruby Ridge and Waco brought this fantasy to life. Other people who conjured revenge fantasies after those events kept them in check, but McVeigh did not.

Dr. Smith repeated something he had told Michel and Herbeck—that McVeigh, in describing his role in the bombing, "reminded me of a high-school student whose science project has been very successful."

Oh, really? Why couldn't he have just grown some fuzzy stuff in petri dishes, scrutinized the rings of Saturn, vivisected frogs?

"He'd been depressed for a long time," he added, "and this project gave him a focus and enabled him to relieve the depression. Most people are not capable intellectually of putting the project together. You have to have someone who's motivated, who's fearless, who has the experience of being a warrior, and who views himself as a warrior."

And if the death penalty is carried out?

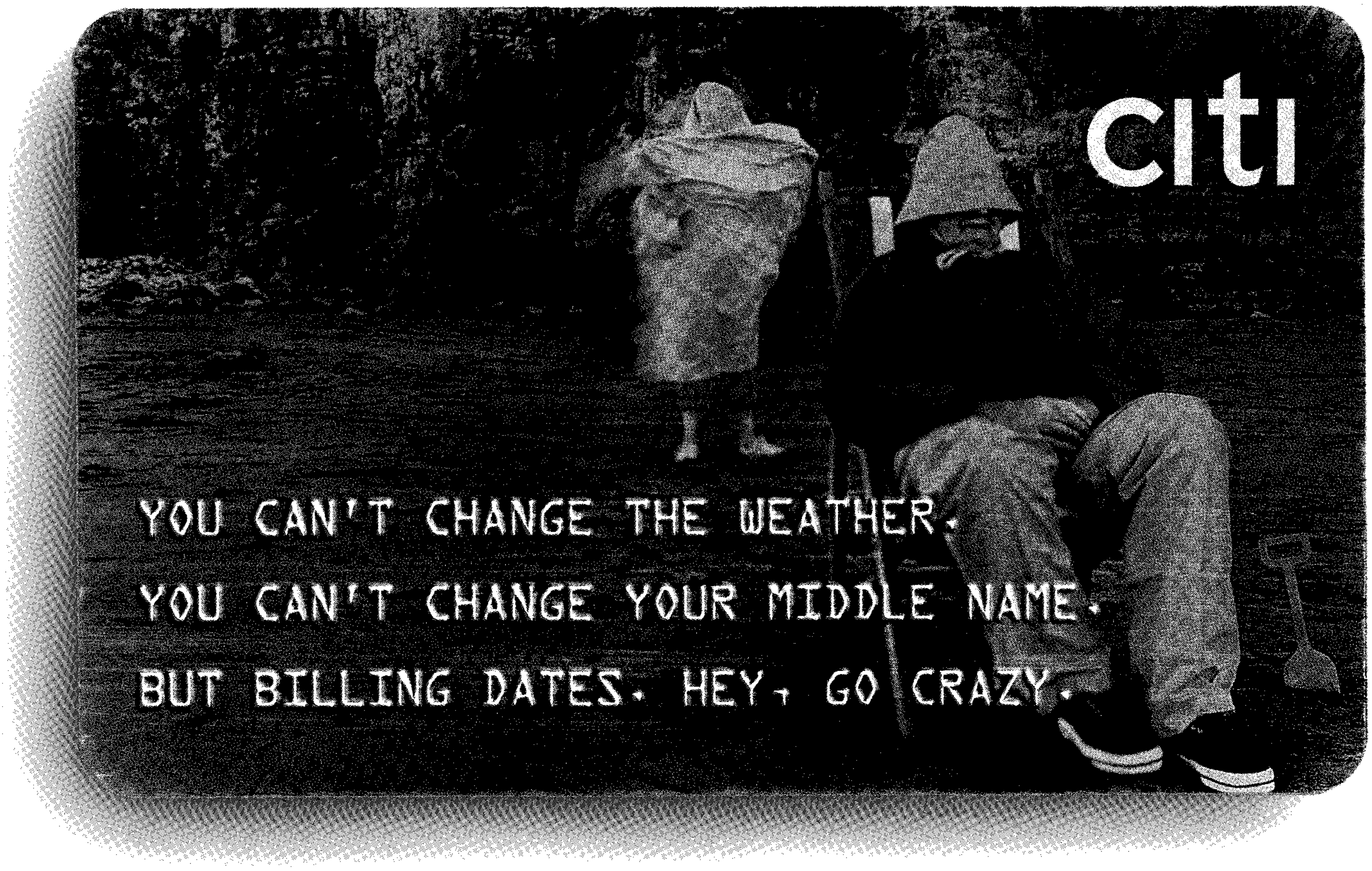
"I think it demeans the United States as a government to have a federal death-penalty law. For the most powerful democracy in the world to rely on the death penalty to control its citizens is an indication of its weakness, not its strength. There's no one on death row who would have been deterred because of the death penalty. We don't need it here."

I had been back in Terre Haute less than half an hour, once again under house arrest at the Holiday Inn, when Attorney General Ashcroft announced the one-month reprieve that McVeigh might or might not have desired. When he finished, I left the TV on, with the sound muted, and settled in. I had work to do and suspected that this would be a quiet place to get it done. A family crowd materialized for the Mother's Day buffet downstairs, but by that evening, when all of Terre Haute was supposed to be eyebrow-deep in the pre-game festivities of the closest thing to a Super Bowl the town was ever likely to witness, I pretty much had the run of the joint. Some traumatized hotel operators, flooded with cancellations, announced that anyone reserving a room for the next round of the deathwatch would have to put up a nonrefundable deposit. Anti-federalist sentiment ran quite high at the Chamber of Commerce when the realization dawned that the new execution date conflicted with the state beauty pageant. The Miss Indiana Celebrity Miniature Golf Tournament & Pizza Party was scheduled for the night before McVeigh's medical appointment. Someone, by God, was going to pay for this.

When I first arrived in town, I had driven out to look at the prison and immediately discovered the best candidate for the title Local Merchant Destined to Be Interviewed Most Often. This was Raoul David, the friendly eponymous proprietor of David's Food Center, a small grocery store that specialized in the major weekend-food groups—meats, sliced cheeses, pickles, chips, salsa, beer—and the most conspicuous business establishment on State Road 63, right across the street from the pokey. The morning after the postponement, David's photograph turned up on the front page of the Indianapolis *Star*, along with a tough-luck account of how the perishable provisions he had stocked up on were going to result in a three-thousand-dollar loss. Later that day, I went back to see him and was relieved to find him in a sanguine frame of mind.

"It's not really that bad," he said. He'd bought a lot of pint containers of whole milk and chocolate milk, and he'd take a hit on those. Also, he'd invested heavily in sandwich rolls and some refrigerator products called Lunch Maker Bologna Fun Kit and Lunch Maker Turkey Fun Kit—fifteen cases' worth that he might have trouble moving. But the shish-kebab meat he'd been planning to grill for the hungry journalists and death-penalty debaters was still in the freezer, and the eighty cases of bottled water would last indefinitely. Memorial Day weekend was coming, his Budweiser distributor had promised to send out a couple of girls in bikinis who would serve beer in the parking lot, and that would boost his cash flow. One area of uncertainty was snack foods. He had a major oversupply of potato chips, nachos, pretzels, cheese curls, and the like, some with expiration dates in September and some in late June. If McVeigh's attorneys decided to seek another delay—well, who knew? Another death-row inmate, a drug dealer and murderer named Juan Raul Garza, is now scheduled for lethal injection eight days after McVeigh. Should Garza somehow get the juice first, that will attract a certain amount of interest, but nothing of shish-kebab proportions. It's McVeigh's expiration date, God bless America, that matters, for all the right reasons and all the wrong ones. ♦

"I'd invite you in, but I have a white couch."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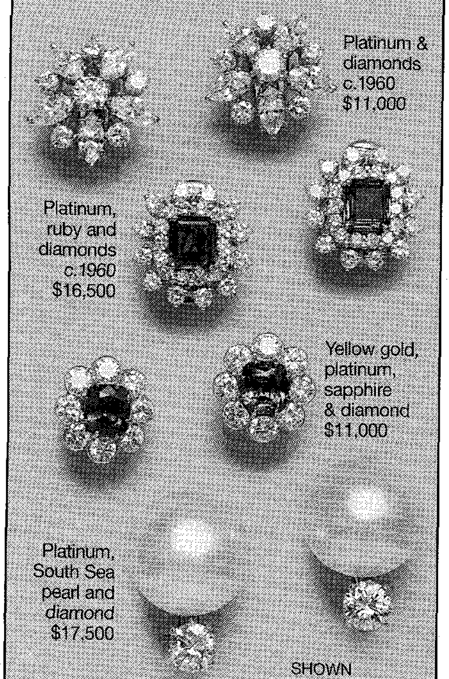

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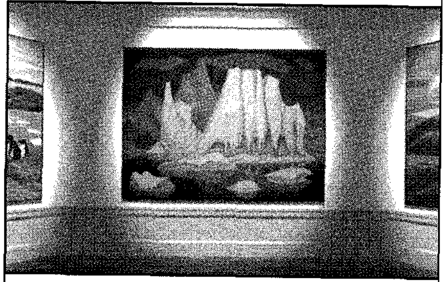

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LETTER FROM WASHINGTON

BUSH FLOORS IT

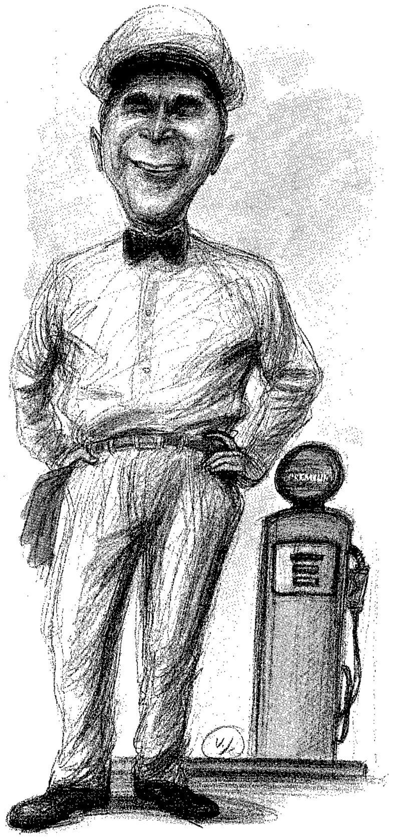
Why the White House energy plan scares the Republicans.

BY NICHOLAS LEMANN

President Bush's tax cut, whatever its eventual drawbacks, offers immediate gratification. The energy plan that he announced last week has the opposite dynamic. The Administration has relentlessly promoted the idea that the country is in a seventies-style energy crisis, but it proposes mainly a long-term solution: increased energy production, which would presumably lead to lower prices by, say, next summer.

But what about this summer? Gasoline prices have been rising, and during the peak driving season they may reach three dollars a gallon in some places. California, at least, and possibly New York and other states, will have rolling blackouts. This summer's energy troubles will produce (as tax issues never do) memorable visuals for television: angry consumers, shut-down factories, signs at gas stations showing record prices, elderly citizens without air-conditioning. Bush's poll numbers have been softening, and if, in a long, hot summer, he responds to people's pain with silence or by counselling patience, they may soften more. The Democrats will be promising relief, in the form of price controls and subsidies, and they will be more conservationist and more environmentalist. How well will Bush's energy initiatives—streamlined power-plant approval, drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge—play in the face of all this?

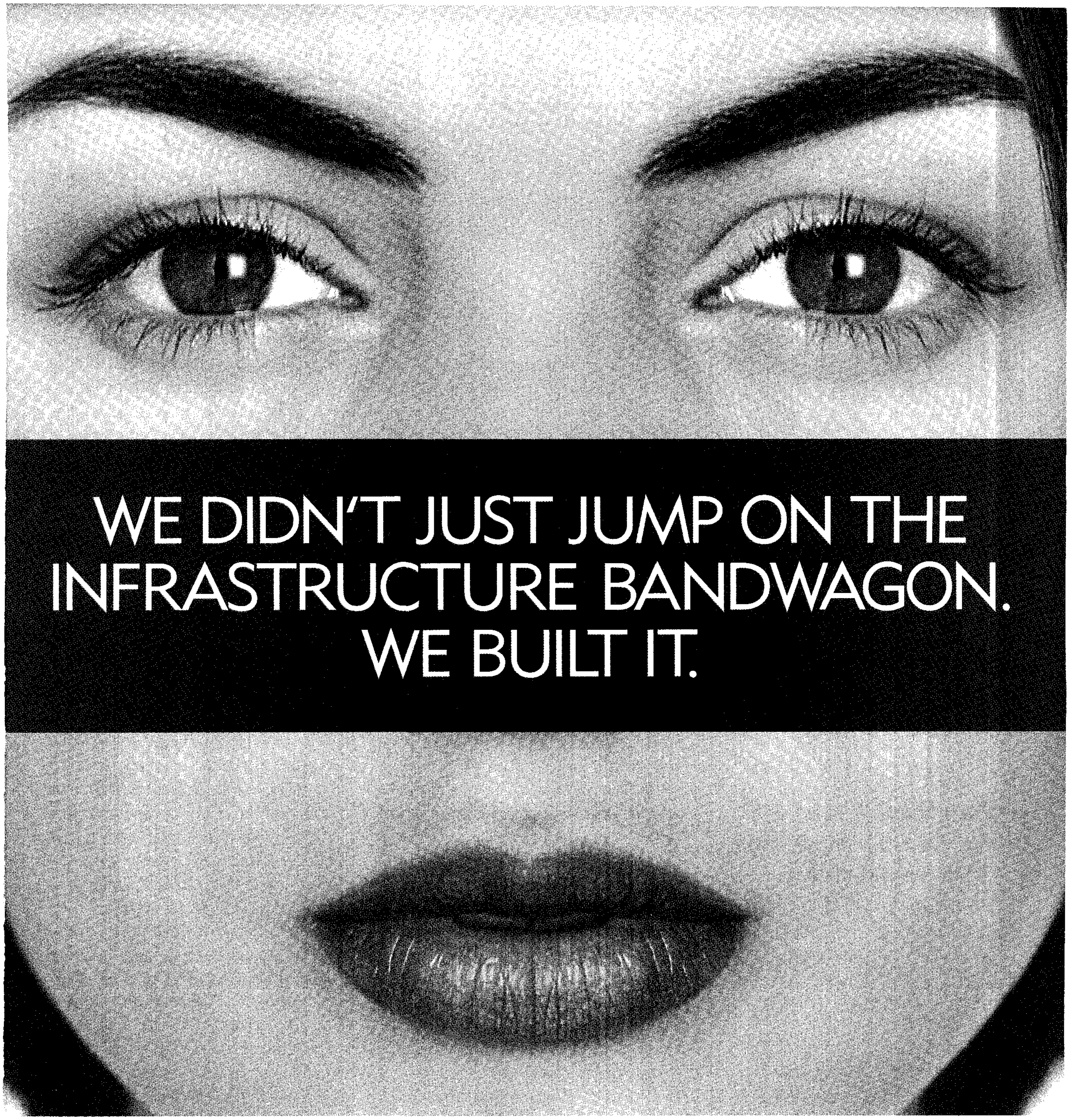
It's obvious that such thoughts have been on the minds of Republican members of Congress, all of whom are two years closer to a reëlection campaign than the President is and very few of whom were consulted on the design of the White House energy plan. "They're starting to freak," one Republican consultant told me. A survey by the Republican pollster Frank Luntz, who has been conducting lots of briefings for members of his party on Capitol Hill, shows that most voters have accepted that there is an energy crisis but do not blame Bush for it, and, for the first time, are saying that increased energy production is more important to them than protecting the environment. But four Republican congressmen I met with this month seemed, in varying degrees, nervous. The House Republicans, evidently, will not simply be voting for the plan as one pristine bill. They want more protection than that.



If gas prices keep going up, the President may be in for a long, hot summer.

VICTOR JUHASZ

The most on-the-reservation of the four was J. C. Watts, of Oklahoma, who is the head of the Republican "message team" in the House. Oklahoma is an oil state, but Watts took pains to present himself to me as a consumer, too, with five kids and a van and bills to pay. "When I'm back home," he said, "pump-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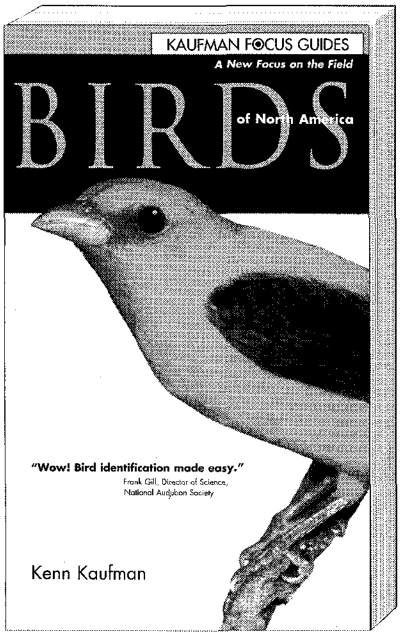
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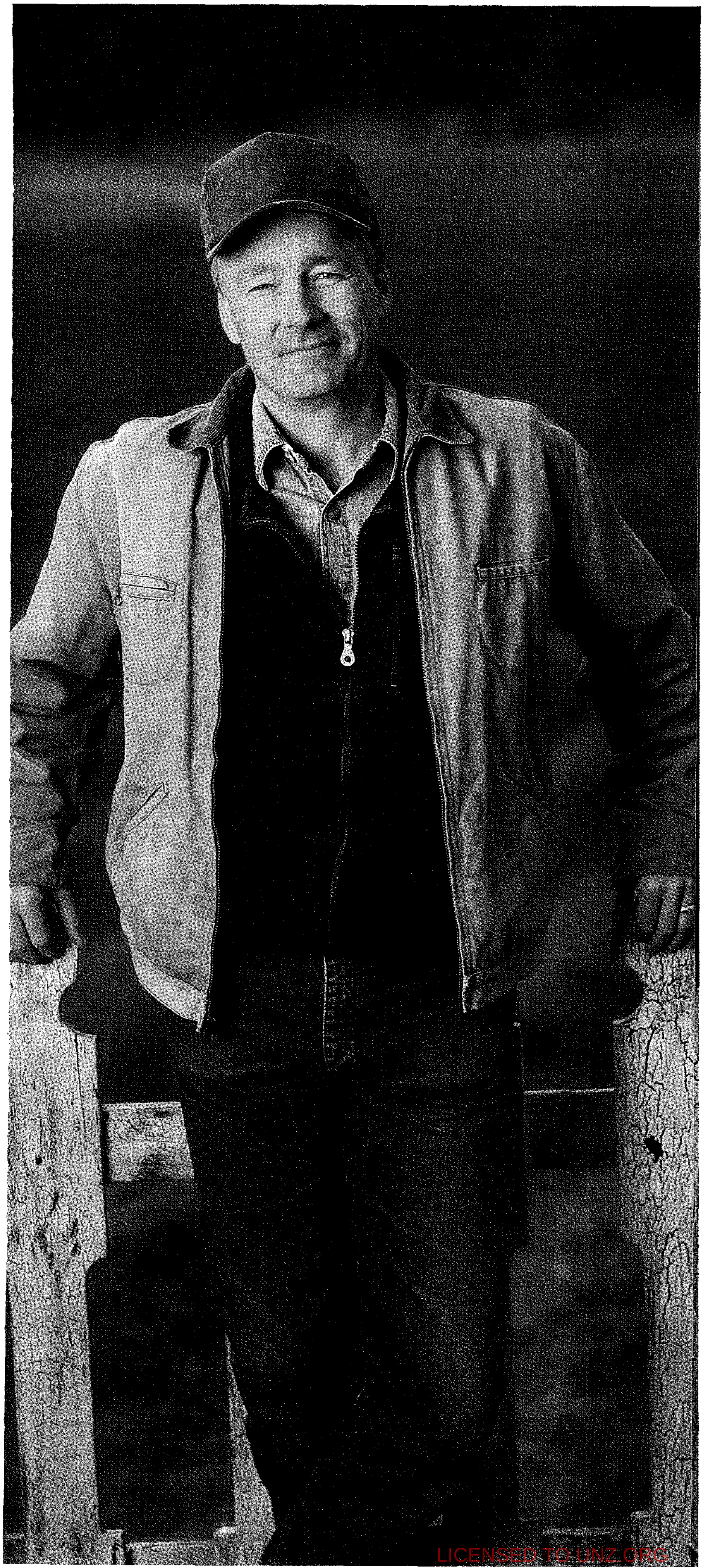
ing my gas at the 7-Eleven, and somebody comes up to me and says, 'You Congressman Watts? Gas prices jumped twenty-five cents in the last ten days!'—the easy thing to say at that time is 'I'm going to go back to Washington and you're going to see these prices decline in the next two months.' But the reality is there aren't going to be quick fixes. So I say, 'Hey, I'm paying these prices as well.' I try and be honest with my constituents and say, 'You're gonna be lookin' at a buck-fifty at the pump. That's O.K.—not as bad as some parts of the country.' You'll see a buck-fifty, two bucks, for quite some time, till we can put a policy in place that'll create more supply."

Joe Barton, of Texas, who is the chairman of a subcommittee of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, had stolen a few minutes between a committee hearing, a floor vote, and a phone call from the governor of Texas. He had before him a briefing packet on the Bush plan. "We'll do a little Economics 101," Barton said, and went on to draw me a graph demonstrating what he saw as California's fateful error—toying with the laws of supply and demand by capping energy prices. Economics 101 or not, though, Barton has proposed what the White House pointedly hasn't: an Emergency Electricity Assistance Act, which is intended to provide relief for California consumers this summer. What has been the White House reaction to his bill? "Supportive," Barton said, "but not demonstratively so."

Billy Tauzin, of Louisiana, the chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, pointed out that his district—Cajun country—is, per capita, the second-highest energy producer in the country but is also the second-highest energy consumer, because it has a lot of refineries and other factories. Simply increasing production, if it means high prices, isn't going to make his constituents happy. He said that he had urged the White House to put more emphasis on conservation and the interests of consumers. "You can't, in my part of the country, turn off the air-conditioning," Tauzin said. "People die." He said that his committee will be proposing its own energy bill, which will be more conservationist than the White House's.

Sherwood Boehlert, who represents several counties in upstate New York, is a member of the Republican moderates' informal caucus in the House—the other end of the scale from J. C. Watts. He has introduced a bill to raise the fuel-efficiency standards for sport-utility vehicles, another move that the White House has declined to make. The day I spoke with him, Boehlert and a few other moderate Republicans were scheduled to meet with Vice-President Cheney. Boehlert presented himself as a loyal critic, who, without grandstanding, was trying to make the White House aware of how things look from his district, where people don't think there is an energy crisis and where environmentalism is a popular cause. "I'd hope for some consideration among key people," Boehlert said. "My experience is they do listen. They hear. The question is, do they heed?"

Why does Bush want to propose an initiative that worries members of his own party? No doubt, the White House plan expresses the natural instinct of people like him and Cheney, who grew up in oil towns and worked for oil companies. (The energy industry was strongly supportive of the Bush-Cheney ticket.) Also, the plan is the latest indication that in White House policy deliberations Cheney usually wins, which means that the most conservative option wins. As is often the case with Bush, there is a brassy political logic to what he's doing. Gray Davis, the governor of California, didn't create the energy crisis—his Republican predecessor, Pete Wilson, signed the deregulation bill that set up the current disaster—but Davis is a prominent Democrat. Is it so terrible to put him in a position where he has to beg Bush for help? Nationally, it's a chance for Bush to try to change the politics of environmentalism. If the President can make people believe that the only way to get reasonably priced, reliable electric power and gasoline is to build more plants and to allow more drilling, he will have turned environmentalism from a cause that hurts Republicans into one that hurts Democrats. (Some Bush people believe that this is how they took West Virginia from Al Gore.) And if that is his goal, his pursuit of it is his biggest political risk yet. He had better hope for cool weather this summer. ♦



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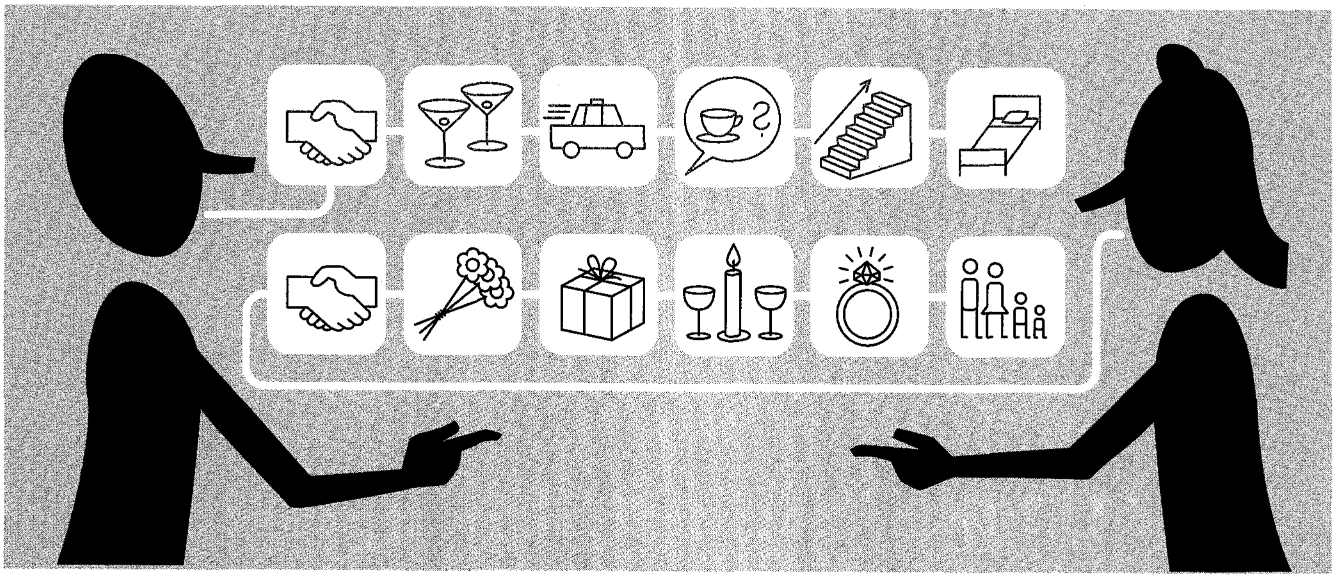
ANNALS OF BUSINESS

ABSOLUTE POWERPOINT

Can a software package edit our thoughts?

BY IAN PARKER

Before there were presentations, there were conversations, which were a little like presentations but used fewer bullet points, and no one had to dim the lights. A woman we can call Sarah Wyndham, a defense-industry consultant living in Alexandria, Virginia, recently began to feel that her two daughters weren't listening when she asked them to clean their bedrooms and do their chores. So, one morning, she sat down at her computer, opened Microsoft's PowerPoint program, and typed:



There are tracts of corporate America where to appear without PowerPoint would be vaguely pretentious, like wearing no shoes.

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

FAMILY MATTERS
An approach for positive change to the
Wyndham family team

On a new page, she wrote:

- Lack of organization leads to confusion and frustration among all family members.
- Disorganization is detrimental to grades and to your social life.
- Disorganization leads to inefficiencies that impact the entire family.

Instead of pleading for domestic harmony, Sarah Wyndham was pitching for it. Soon she had eighteen pages of large type, supplemented by a color photograph of a generic happy family riding bicycles, and, on the final page, a drawing of a key—the key to success. The briefing was given only once, last fall. The experience was so upsetting to her children that the threat of a second showing was enough to make one of the Wyndham girls burst into tears.

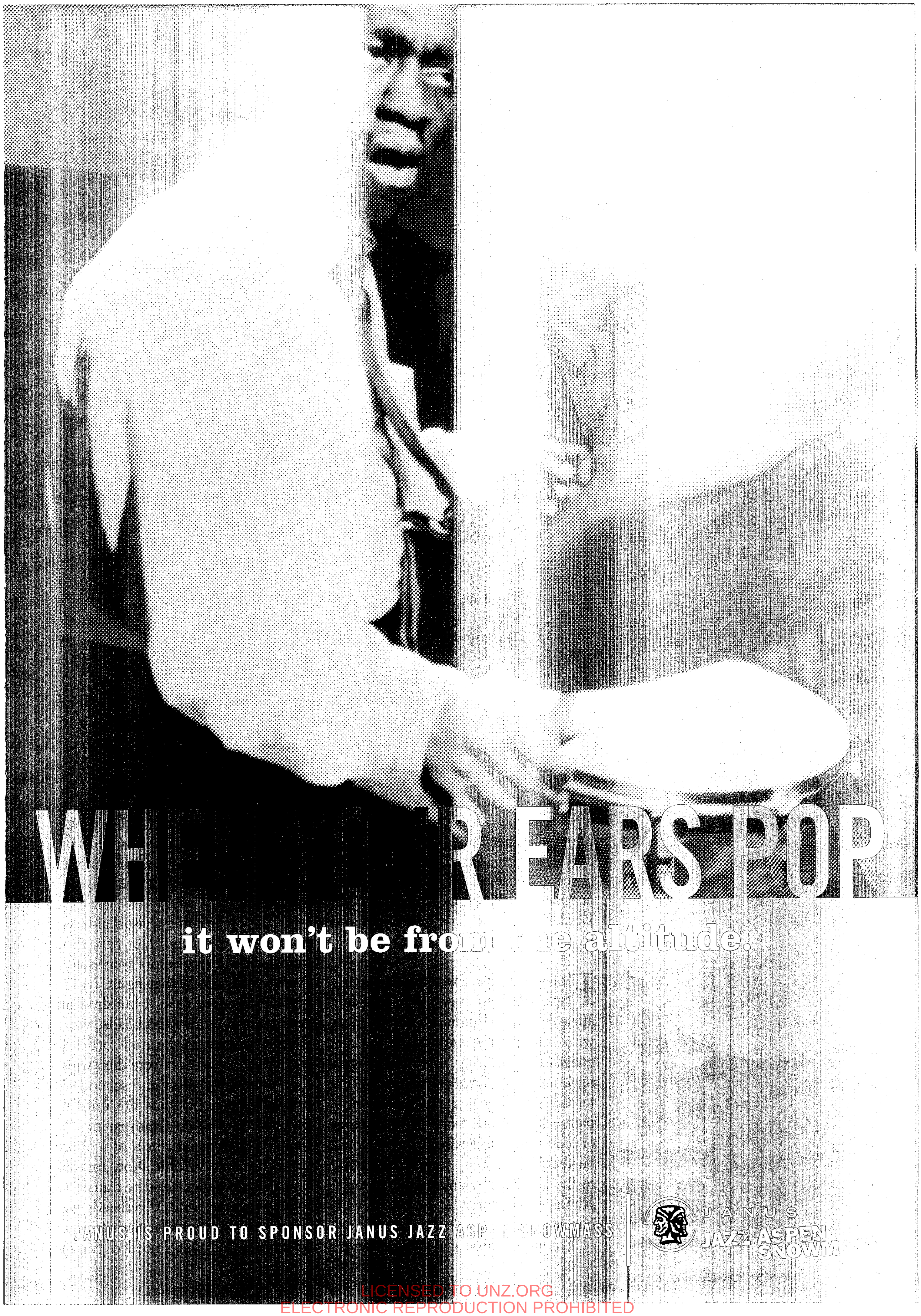
PowerPoint, which can be found on two hundred and fifty million computers around the world, is software you impose on other people. It allows you to arrange text and graphics in a series of pages, which you can project, slide by slide, from a laptop computer onto a screen, or print as a booklet (as Sarah Wyndham did). The usual metaphor for everyday software is the tool, but that doesn't seem to be right here. PowerPoint is more like a suit of clothes, or a car, or plastic surgery. You take it out with you. You are judged by it—you insist on being judged by it. It is by definition a social instrument, turning middle managers into bullet-point dandies.

But PowerPoint also has a private, interior influence. It edits ideas. It is, almost surreptitiously, a business manual as well as a business suit, with an opinion—an oddly pedantic, prescriptive opinion—about the way we should think. It helps you make a case, but it also makes its own case: about how to organize information, how much information to organize, how to look at the world. One feature of this is the AutoContent Wizard, which supplies templates—“Managing Organizational Change” or “Communicating Bad News,” say—that are so close to finished presentations you barely need to do more than add your company logo. The “Motivating a Team” template, for example, includes a slide headed “Conduct a Creative Thinking Session”:

- Ask: In what ways can we. . . ?
  —Assess the situation. Get the facts.
  —Generate possible solutions with green light, nonjudgmental thinking.
  —Select the best solution.

The final injunction is “Have an inspirational close.”

It's easy to avoid these extreme templates—many people do—as well as embellishments like clip art, animations, and sound effects. But it's hard to shake off AutoContent's spirit: even the most easygoing PowerPoint template insists on a heading followed by bullet points, so that the user is shepherded toward a staccato, summarizing frame of mind, of the kind parodied, for example, in a PowerPoint Gettysburg Address posted on the Internet: “Dedicate portion of field—fitting!”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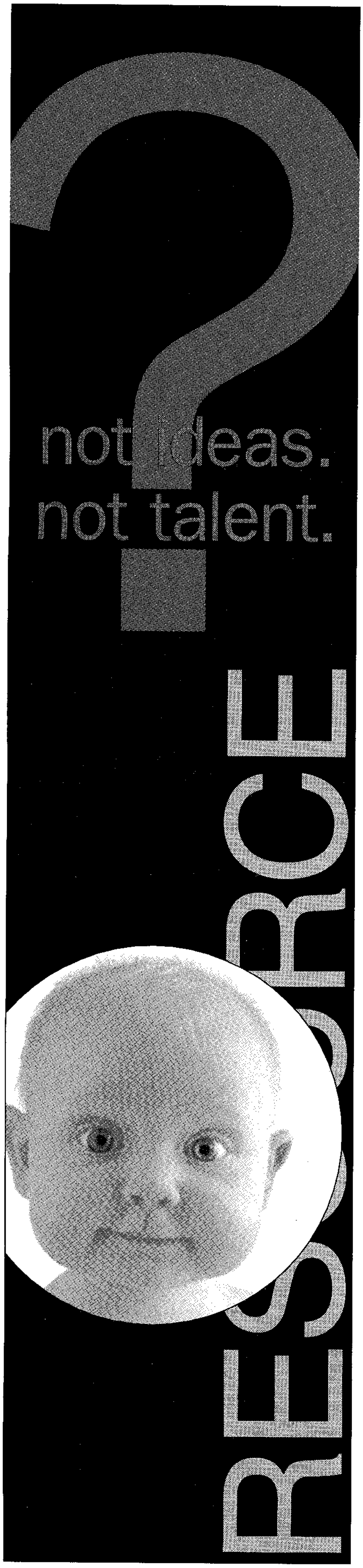

not ideas.
not talent.
RESOURCE

Because PowerPoint can be an impressive antidote to fear—converting public-speaking dread into moviemaking pleasure—there seems to be no great impulse to fight this influence, as you might fight the unrelenting animated paperclip in Microsoft Word. Rather, PowerPoint's restraints seem to be soothing—so much so that where Microsoft has not written rules, businesses write them for themselves. A leading U.S. computer manufacturer has distributed guidelines to its employees about PowerPoint presentations, insisting on something it calls the "Rule of Seven": "Seven (7) bullets or lines per page, seven (7) words per line."

Today, after Microsoft's decade of dizzying growth, there are great tracts of corporate America where to appear at a meeting without PowerPoint would be unwelcome and vaguely pretentious, like wearing no shoes. In darkened rooms at industrial plants and ad agencies, at sales pitches and conferences, this is how people are communicating: no paragraphs, no pronouns—the world condensed into a few upbeat slides, with seven or so words on a line, seven or so lines on a slide. And now it's happening during sermons and university lectures and family arguments, too. A New Jersey PowerPoint user recently wrote in an online discussion, "Last week I caught myself planning out (in my head) the slides I would need to explain to my wife why we couldn't afford a vacation this year." Somehow, a piece of software designed, fifteen years ago, to meet a simple business need has become a way of organizing thought at kindergarten show-and-tells. "Oh, Lord," one of the early developers said to me. "What have we done?"

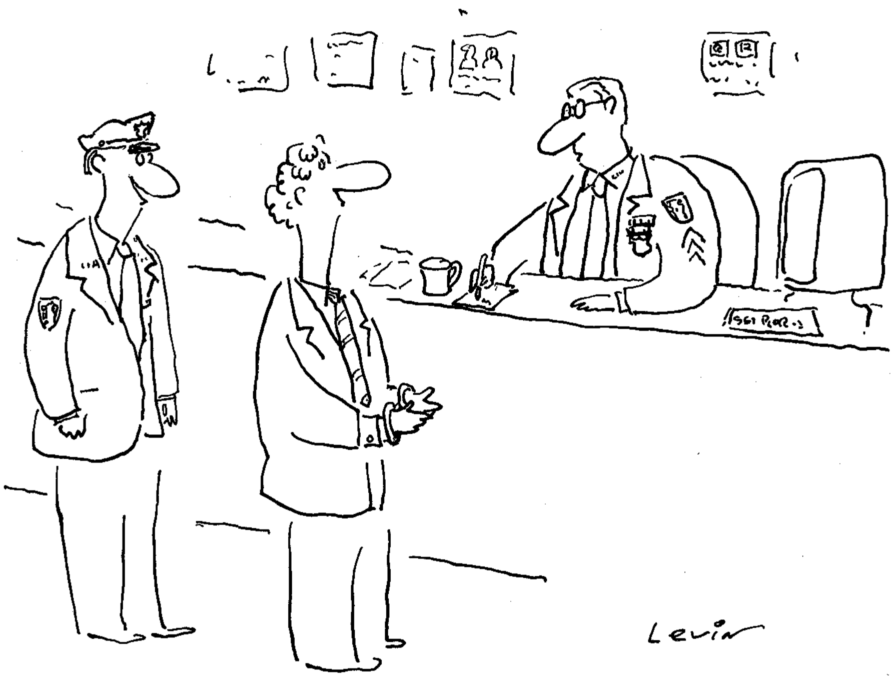
Forty years ago, a workplace meeting was a discussion with your immediate colleagues. Engineers would meet with other engineers and talk in the language of engineering. A manager might make an appearance—acting as an interpreter, a bridge to the rest of the company—but no one from the marketing or production or sales department would be there. Somebody might have gone to the trouble of cranking out mimeographs—that would be the person with purple fingers.

But the structure of American industry changed in the nineteen-sixties and seventies. Clifford Nass, who teaches in the Department of Communication at Stanford, says, "Companies weren't discovering things in the laboratory and then trying to convince consumers to buy them. They were discovering—or creating—consumer demand, figuring out what they can convince consumers they need, then going to the laboratory and saying, 'Build this!' People were saying, 'We can create demand. Even if demand doesn't exist, we know how to market this.' SpaghettiOs is the great example. The guy came up with the jingle first: 'The neat round spaghetti you can eat with a spoon.' And he said, 'Hey! Make spaghetti in the shape of small circles!' "

As Jerry Porras, a professor of organizational behavior and change at Stanford Graduate School of Business, says, "When technologists no longer just drove the product out but the customer sucked it out, then you had to know what the customer wanted, and that meant a lot more interaction inside the company." There are new conversations: Can we make this? How do we sell this if we make it? Can we do it in blue?

America began to go to more meetings. By the early nineteen-eighties, when the story of PowerPoint starts, employees had to find ways to talk to colleagues from other departments, colleagues who spoke a different language, brought together by SpaghettiOs and by the simple fact that technology was generating more information. There was more to know and, as the notion of a job for life eroded, more reason to know it.

In this environment, visual aids were bound to thrive. In 1975, fifty thousand overhead projectors were sold in America. By 1985, that figure had increased to more than a hundred and twenty thousand. Overheads, which were developed in the mid-forties for use by the police, and were then widely used in bowling alleys and schools, did not fully enter business life until the mid-seventies, when a transparency film that could survive the heat of a photocopier became available. Now anything on a sheet of paper could be transferred to an overhead slide. Overheads were cheaper than the popular alternative, the 35-mm. slide (which needed graphics



"You have the right to one hands-free phone call."

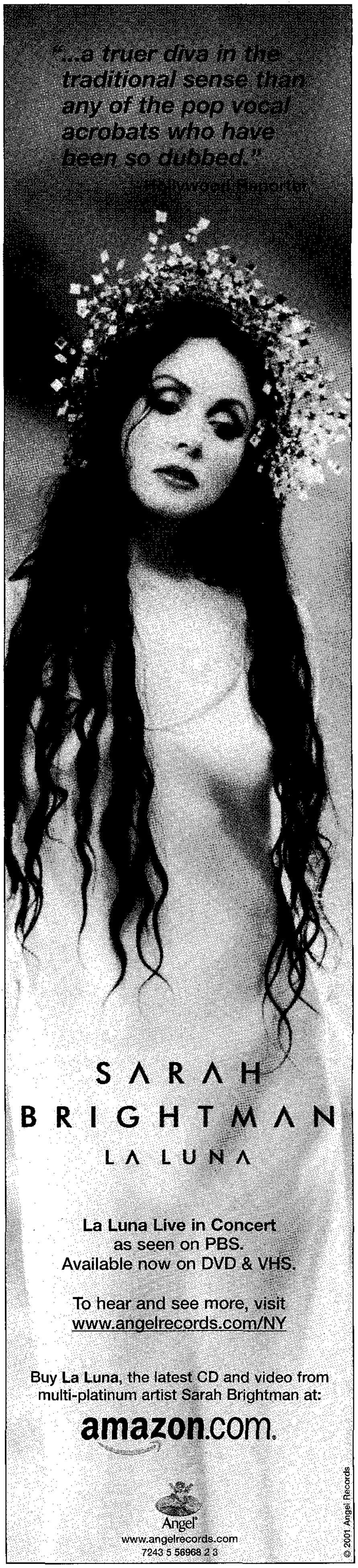
• •

professionals), and they were easier to use. But they restricted you to your typewriter's font—rather, your secretary's typewriter's font—or your skill with Letraset and a felt-tipped pen. A businessman couldn't generate a handsome, professional-looking font in his own office.

In 1980, though, it was clear that a future of widespread personal computers—and laser printers and screens that showed the very thing you were about to print—was tantalizingly close. In the Mountain View, California, laboratory of Bell-Northern Research, computer-research scientists had set up a great mainframe computer, a graphics workstation, a phototypesetter, and the earliest Canon laser printer, which was the size of a bathtub and took six men to carry into the building—together, a cumbersome approximation of what would later fit on a coffee table and cost a thousand dollars. With much trial and error, and jogging from one room to another, you could use this collection of machines as a kind of word processor.

Whitfield Diffie had access to this equipment. A mathematician, a former peacenik, and an enemy of exclusive government control of encryption systems, Diffie had secured a place for himself in computing legend in 1976, when he and a colleague, Martin Hellman, announced the discovery of a new method of protecting secrets electronically—public-key cryptography. At Bell-Northern, Diffie was researching the security of telephone systems. In 1981, preparing to give a presentation with 35-mm. slides, he wrote a little program, tinkering with some graphics software designed by a B.N.R. colleague, that allowed you to draw a black frame on a piece of paper. Diffie expanded it so that the page could show a number of frames, and text inside each frame, with space for commentary around them. In other words, he produced a storyboard—a slide show on paper—that could be sent to the designers who made up the slides, and that would also serve as a script for his lecture. (At this stage, he wasn't photocopying what he had produced to make overhead transparencies, although scientists in other facilities were doing that.) With a few days' effort, Diffie had pointed the way to PowerPoint.

Diffie has long gray hair and likes to wear fine English suits. Today, he works for Sun Microsystems, as an internal consultant on encryption matters. I recently had lunch with him in Palo Alto,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and for the first time he publicly acknowledged his presence at the birth of PowerPoint. It was an odd piece of news: as if Lenin had invented the stapler. Yes, he said, PowerPoint was “based on” his work at B.N.R. This is not of great consequence to Diffie, whose reputation in his own field is so high that he is one of the few computer scientists to receive erotically charged fan mail. He said he was “mildly miffed” to have made no money from the PowerPoint connection, but he has no interest in beginning a feud with an old friend. “Bob was the one who had the vision to understand how important it was to the world,” he said. “And I didn’t.”

Bob is Bob Gaskins, the man who has to take final responsibility for the drawn blinds of high-rise offices around the world and the bullet points dashing across computer screens inside. His account of PowerPoint’s parentage does not exactly match Diffie’s, but he readily accepts his former colleague as “my inspiration.” In the late nineteen-seventies and early eighties, Gaskins was B.N.R.’s head of computer-science research. A former Berkeley Ph.D. student, he had a family background in industrial photographic supplies and grew up around overhead projectors and inks and gels. In 1982, he returned from a six-month overseas business trip and, with a vivid sense of the future impact of the Apple Macintosh and of Microsoft’s Windows (both of which were in development), he wrote a list of fifty commercial possibilities—Arabic typesetting, menus, signs. And then he looked around his own laboratory and realized what had happened while he was away: following Diffie’s lead, his colleagues were trying to make overheads to pitch their projects for funding, despite the difficulties of using the equipment. (What you saw was not at all what you got.) “Our mainframe was buckling under the load,” Gaskins says.

He now had his idea: a graphics program that would work with Windows and the Macintosh, and that would put together, and edit, a string of single pages, or “slides.” In 1984, he left B.N.R., joined an ailing Silicon Valley software firm, Forethought, in exchange for a sizable share of the company, and hired a software developer, Dennis Austin. They began work on a program called Presenter. After a trademark problem, and an epiphany Gaskins had in the shower, Presenter became PowerPoint.

Gaskins is a precise, bookish man who lives with his wife in a meticulously restored and furnished nineteenth-century house in the Fillmore district of San Francisco. He has recently discovered an interest in antique concertinas. When I visited him, he was persuaded to play a tune, and he gave me a copy of a forthcoming paper he had co-written: “A Wheatstone Twelve-Sided ‘Edeophone’ Concertina with Pre-MacCann Chromatic Duet Fingering.” Gaskins is skeptical about the product that PowerPoint has become—AutoContent and animated fades between slides—but he is devoted to the simpler thing that it was, and he led me through a well-preserved archive of PowerPoint memorabilia, including the souvenir program for the PowerPoint reunion party, in 1997, which had a quiz filled with in-jokes about font size and programming languages. He also found an old business plan from 1984. One phrase—the only one in italics—read, “Allows the content-originator to control the presentation.” For Gaskins, that had always been the point: to get rid of the intermediaries—graphic designers—and never mind the consequences. Whenever colleagues sought to restrict the design possibilities of the program (to make a design disaster less likely), Gaskins would overrule them, quoting Thoreau: “I came into this world, not chiefly to make this a good place to live in, but to live in it, be it good or bad.”

PowerPoint 1.0 went on sale in April, 1987—available only for the Macintosh, and only in black-and-white. It generated text-and-graphics pages that a photocopier could turn into overhead transparencies. (This was before laptop computers and portable projectors made PowerPoint a tool for live electronic presentations. Gaskins thinks he may have been the first person to use the program in the modern way, in a Paris hotel in 1992—which is like being the first person ever to tap a microphone and say, “Can you hear me at the back?”) The Macintosh market was small and specialized, but within this market PowerPoint—the first product of its kind—was a hit. “I can’t describe how wonderful

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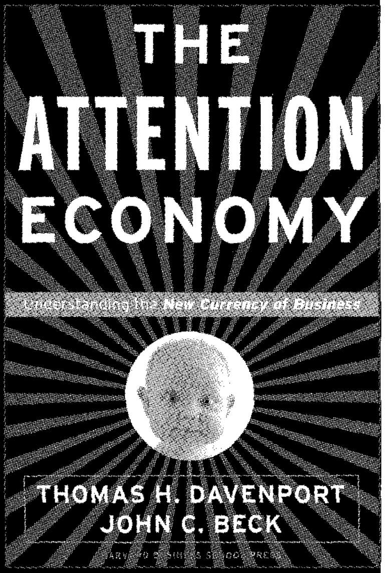
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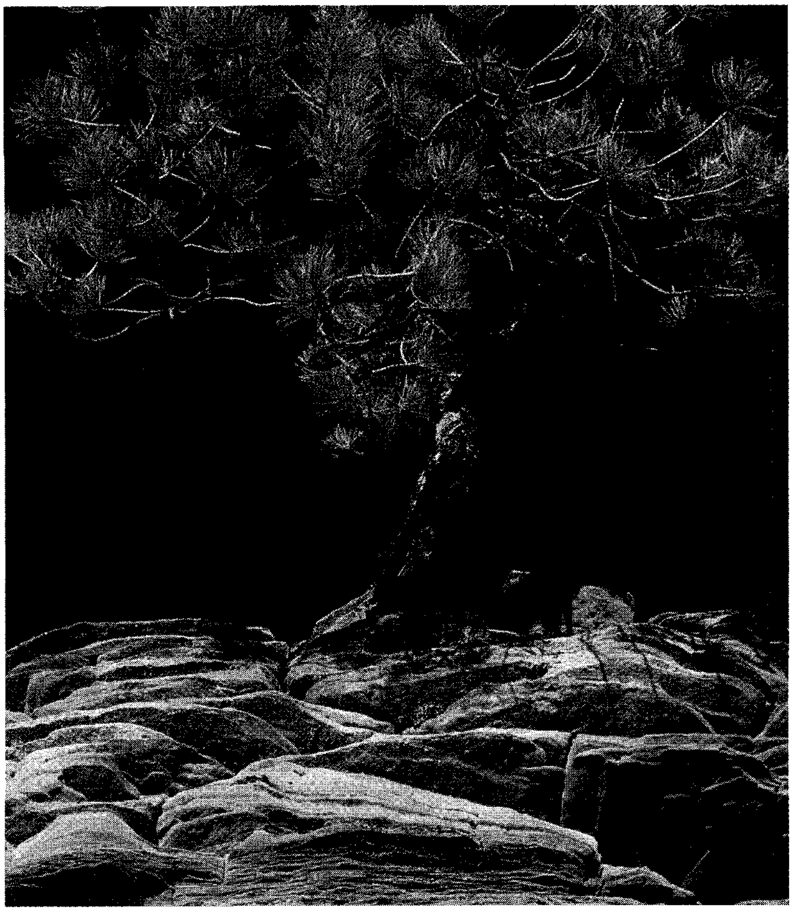

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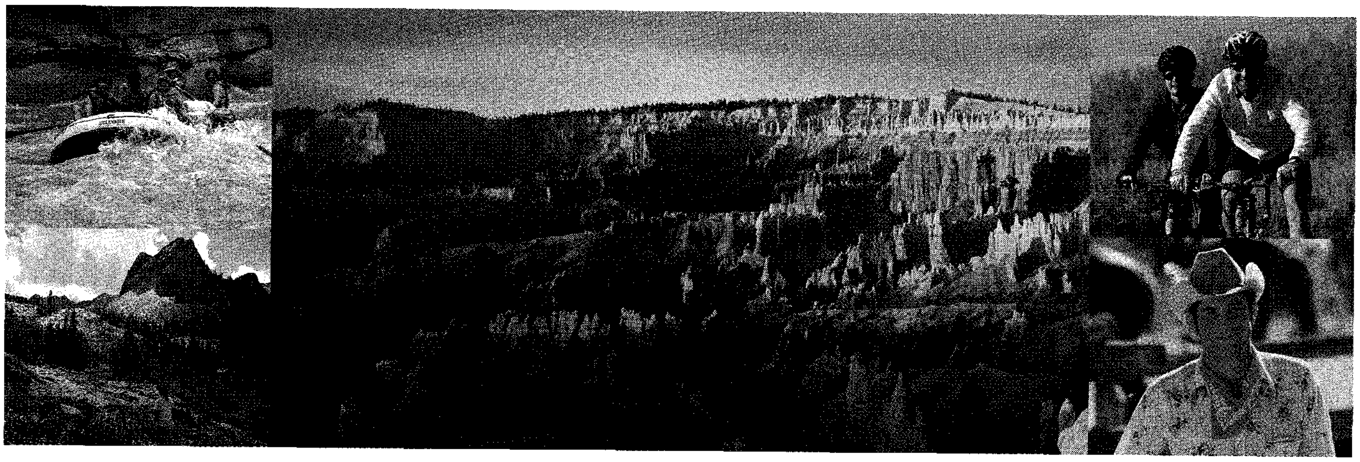

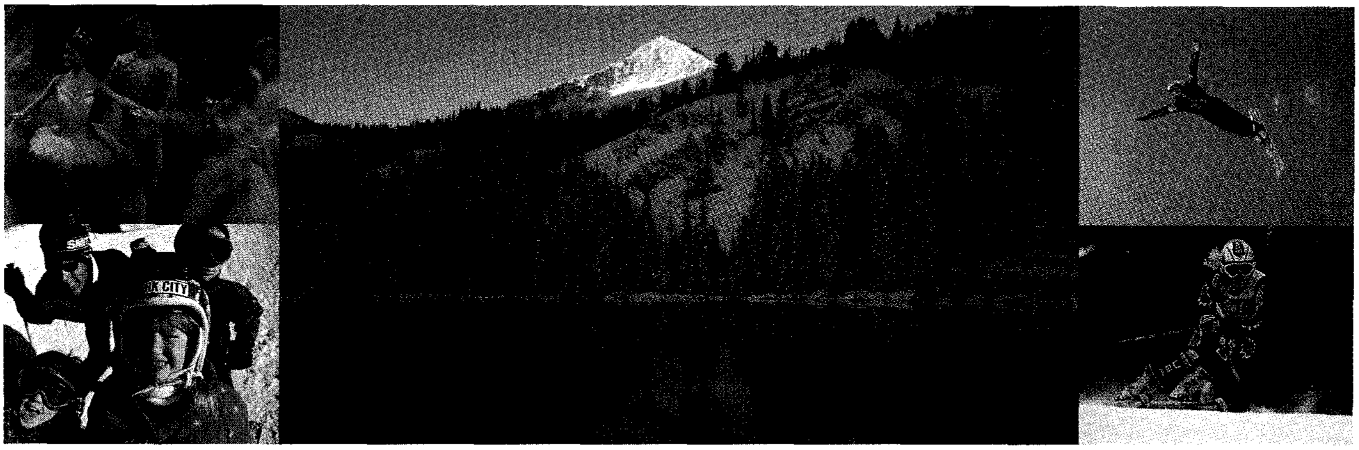

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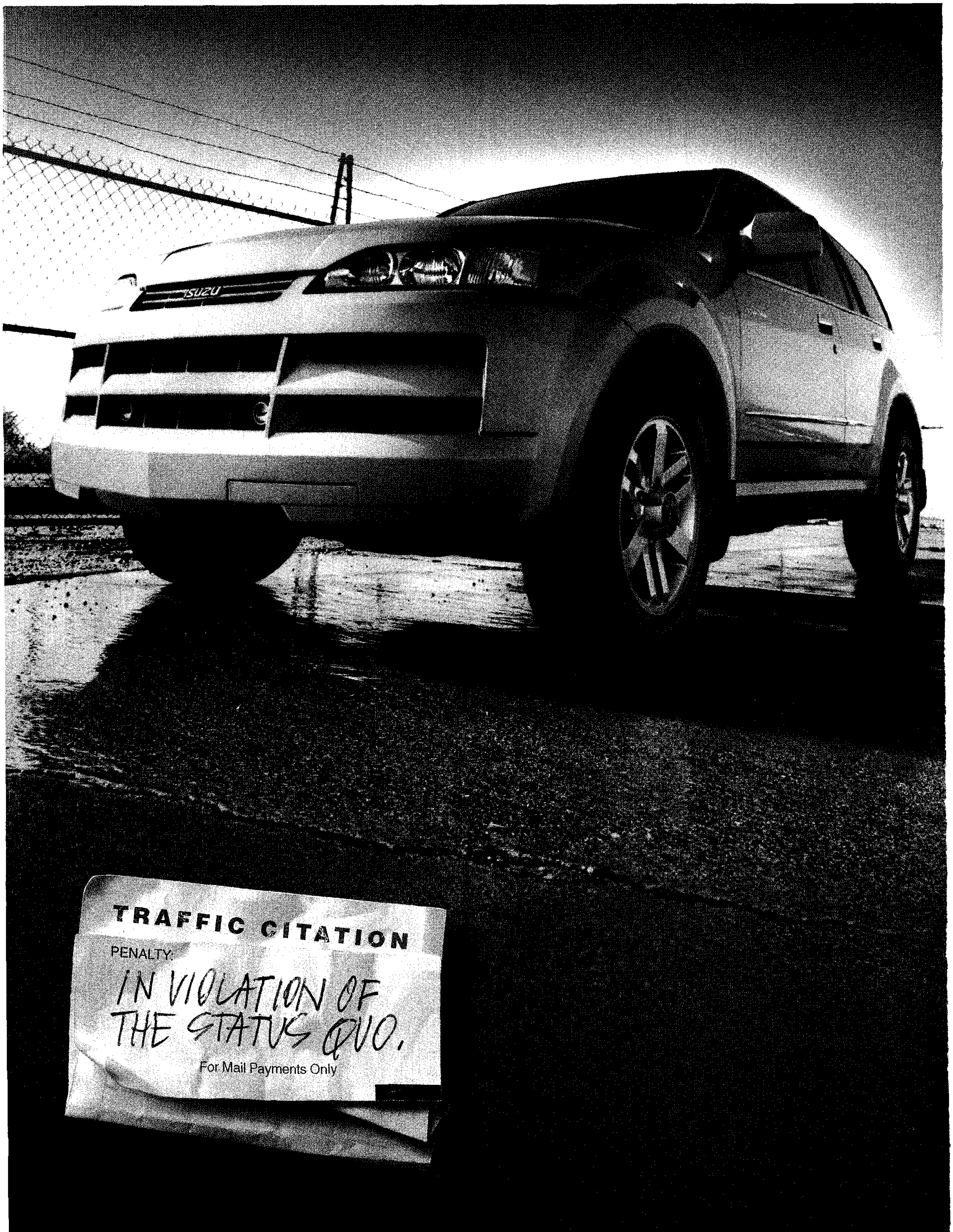
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it was,” Gaskins says. “When we demonstrated at trade shows, we were mobbed.” Shortly after the launch, Forethought accepted an acquisition offer of fourteen million dollars from Microsoft. Microsoft paid cash and allowed Bob Gaskins and his colleagues to remain partly self-governing in Silicon Valley, far from the Microsoft campus, in Redmond, Washington. Microsoft soon regretted the terms of the deal; PowerPoint workers became known for a troublesome independence of spirit (and for rewarding themselves, now and then, with beautifully staged parties—caviar, string quartets, Renaissance-period fancy dress).

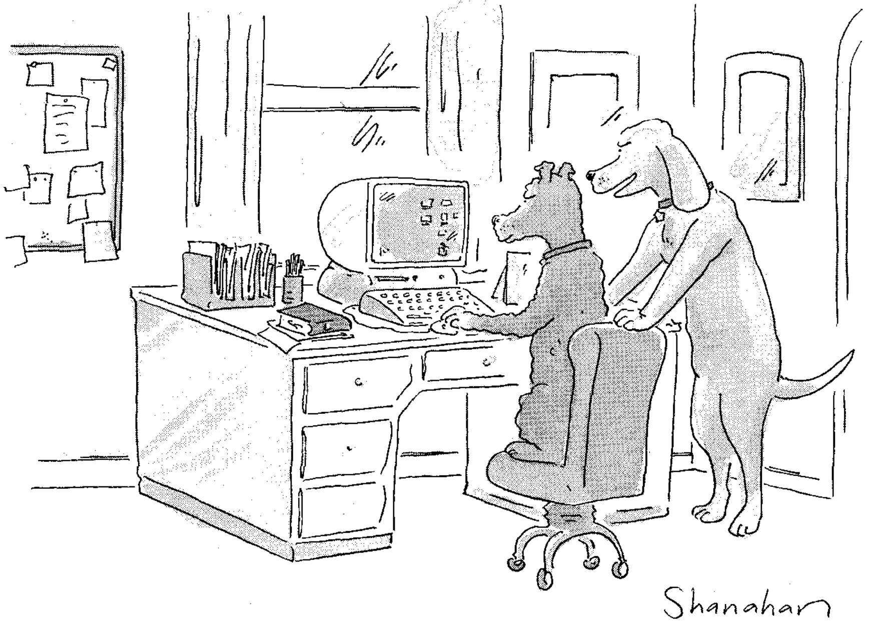
PowerPoint had been created, in part, as a response to the new corporate world of interdepartmental communication. Those involved with the program now experienced the phenomenon at first hand. In 1990, the first PowerPoint for Windows was launched, alongside Windows 3.0. And PowerPoint quickly became what Gaskins calls “a cog in the great machine.” The PowerPoint programmers were forced to make unwelcome changes, partly because in 1990 Word, Excel, and PowerPoint began to be integrated into Microsoft Office—a strategy that would eventually make PowerPoint invincible—and partly in response to market research. AutoContent was added in the mid-nineties, when Microsoft learned that some would-be presenters were uncomfortable with a blank PowerPoint page—it was hard to get started. “We said, ‘What we need is some automatic content!’ ” a former Microsoft developer recalls, laughing. “ ‘Punch the button and you’ll have a presentation.’ ” The idea, he thought, was “crazy.” And the name was meant as a joke. But Microsoft took the idea and kept the name—a rare example of a product named in outright mockery of its target customers.

Gaskins left PowerPoint in 1992, and many of his colleagues followed soon after. Now rich from Microsoft stock, and beginning the concertina-collecting phase of their careers, they watched as their old product made its way into the heart of American business culture. By 1993, PowerPoint had a majority share of the presentation market. In 1995, the average user created four and a half presentations a month. Three years later, the monthly average was nine. PowerPoint began to appear in cartoon strips and everyday conversation. A few years ago, Bob Gaskins was at a presentations-heavy conference in Britain. The organizer brought the proceedings to a sudden stop, saying, “I’ve just been told that the inventor of PowerPoint is in the audience—will he please identify himself so we can recognize his contribution to the advancement of science?” Gaskins stood up. The audience laughed and applauded.

Cathleen Belleville, a former graphic designer who worked at PowerPoint as a product planner from 1989 to 1995, was amazed to see a clip-art series she had created become modern business icons. The images were androgynous silhouette stick figures (she called them Screen Beans), modelled on a former college roommate: a little figure clicking its heels; another with an inspirational light bulb above its head. One Screen Bean, the patron saint of PowerPoint—a figure that stands beneath a question mark, scratching its head in puzzlement—is so popular that a lawyer at a New York firm who has seen many PowerPoint presentations claims never to have seen one without the head-scratcher. Belleville herself has seen her Beans all over the world, reprinted on baseball caps, blown up fifteen feet high in a Hamburg bank. “I told my mom, ‘You know, my artwork is in danger of being more famous than the “Mona Lisa.” ’ ” Above the counter in a laundromat on Third Avenue in New York, a sign explains that no responsibility can be taken for deliveries to doorman buildings. And there, next to the words, is the famous puzzled figure. It is hard to understand the puzzlement. Doorman? Delivery? But perhaps this is simply how a modern poster clears its throat: Belleville has created the international sign for “sign.”

According to Microsoft estimates, at least thirty million PowerPoint presentations are made every day. The program has about ninety-five per cent of the presentations-software market. And so perhaps it was inevitable that it would migrate out of business and into other areas of our lives. I recently spoke to Sew Meng Chung, a Malaysian research engineer living in Singapore who got married in 1999. He told me that, as his guests took their seats for a wedding party in the Goodwood Park Hotel, they were treated to a PowerPoint presentation: a hundred and thirty photographs—one fading into the next every four or five seconds, to musical accompaniment. “They were baby photos, and courtship photos, and photos taken with our friends and family,” he told me.

I also spoke to Terry Taylor, who runs a Web site called eBibleTeacher.com, which supplies materials for churches that use electronic visual aids. “Jesus



“Let’s see if we can’t scatter the trash all over his desktop.”

was a storyteller, and he gave graphic images," Taylor said. "He would say, 'Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow,' and all indications are that there were lilies in the field when he was talking, you know. He used illustrations." Taylor estimates that fifteen per cent of American churches now have video projectors, and many use PowerPoint regularly for announcements, for song lyrics, and to accompany preaching. (Taylor has seen more than one sermon featuring the head-scratching figure.) Visitors to Taylor's site can download photographs of locations in the Holy Land, as well as complete PowerPoint sermons—for example, "Making Your Marriage Great":

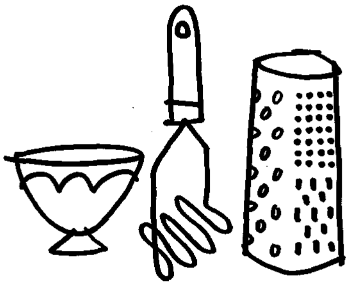
- Find out what you are doing to harm your marriage and heal it.
- Financial irresponsibility
- Temper
- Pornography
- Substance abuse
- You name it!

When PowerPoint is used to flash hymn lyrics, or make a quick pitch to a new client, or produce an eye-catching laundromat poster, it's easy to understand the enthusiasm of, say, Tony Kurz, the vice-president for sales and marketing of a New York-based Internet company, who told me, "I love PowerPoint. It's a brilliant application. I can take you through at exactly the pace I want to take you." There are probably worse ways to transmit fifty or a hundred words of text, or information that is mainly visual—ways that involve more droning, more drifting. And PowerPoint demands at least some rudimentary preparation: a PowerPoint presenter is, by definition, not thinking about his or her material for the very first time. Steven Pinker, the author of "The Language Instinct" and a psychology professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, says that PowerPoint can give visual shape to an argument. "Language is a linear medium: one damn word after another," he says. "But ideas are multidimensional. . . . When properly employed, PowerPoint makes the logical structure of an argument more transparent. Two channels sending the same information are better than one."

Still, it's hard to be perfectly comfortable with a product whose developers occasionally find themselves trying to suppress its use. Jolene Rocchio, who is a product planner for Microsoft Office (and is upbeat about PowerPoint in general), told me that, at a recent meeting of a nonprofit organization in San Francisco, she argued *against* a speaker's using PowerPoint at a future conference. "I said, 'I think we just need her to get up and speak.' " On an earlier occasion, Rocchio said, the same speaker had tried to use PowerPoint and the projector didn't work, "and everybody was, like, cheering. They just wanted to hear this woman speak, and they wanted it to be from her heart. And the PowerPoint almost alienated her audience."

This is the most common complaint about PowerPoint. Instead of human contact, we are given human display. "I think that we as a people have become unaccustomed to having real conversations with each other, where we actually give and take to arrive at a new answer. We present to each other, instead of discussing," Cathy Belleville says. Tad Simons, the editor of the magazine *Presentations* (whose second-grade son used PowerPoint for show-and-tell), is familiar with the sin of triple delivery, where precisely the same text is seen on the screen, spoken aloud, and printed on the handout in front of you (the "leave-behind," as it is known in some circles). "The thing that makes my heart sing is when somebody presses the 'B' button and the screen goes black and you can actually talk to the person," Simons told me.

In 1997, Sun Microsystems' chairman and C.E.O., Scott McNealy, "banned" PowerPoint (a ban widely disregarded by his staff). The move might have been driven, in part, by Sun's public-relations needs as a Microsoft rival, but, according to McNealy, there were genuine productivity issues. "Why did we ban it? Let me put it this way: If I want to tell my forty thousand employees to attack, the word 'attack' in ASCII is forty-eight bits. As a Microsoft Word document, it's 90,112 bits. Put that same word in a PowerPoint slide and it becomes 458,048 bits. That's a pig through the python when you try to send it over the Net." McNealy's concern is shared by the American military. Enormously elaborate PowerPoint files (generated by presentation-obsessives—so-called PowerPoint Rangers) were said to be clogging up the military's bandwidth. Last year, to the delight of many under his command, General Henry H. Shelton, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, issued an order to U.S. bases around the world insisting on simpler presentations.



PowerPoint was developed to give public speakers control over design decisions. But it's possible that those speakers should be making other, more important decisions. "In the past, I think we had an inefficient system, where executives passed all of their work to secretaries," Cathy Belleville says. "But now we've got highly paid people sitting there formatting slides—spending hours formatting slides—because it's more fun to do that than concentrate on what you're going to say. It would be much more efficient to offload that work onto someone who could do it in a tenth of the time, and be paid less. Millions of executives around the world are sitting there going, 'Arial? Times Roman? Twenty-four point? Eighteen point?' "

In the glow of a PowerPoint show, the world is condensed, simplified, and smoothed over—yet bright and hyper-real—like the cityscape background in a PlayStation motor race. PowerPoint is strangely adept at disguising the fragile foundations of a proposal, the emptiness of a business plan; usually, the audience is respectfully still (only venture capitalists dare to dictate the pace of someone else's slide show), and, with the visual distraction of a dancing pie chart, a speaker can quickly move past the laughable flaw in his argument. If anyone notices, it's too late—the narrative presses on.

Last year, three researchers at Arizona State University, including Robert Cialdini, a professor of psychology and the author of "Influence: Science and Practice," conducted an experiment in which they presented three groups of volunteers with information about Andrew, a fictional high-school student under consideration for a university football scholarship. One group was given Andrew's football statistics typed on a piece of paper. The second group was shown bar graphs. Those in the third group were given a PowerPoint presentation, in which animated bar graphs grew before their eyes.

Given Andrew's record, what kind of prospect was he? According to Cialdini, when Andrew was PowerPointed, viewers saw him as a greater potential asset to the football team. The first group rated Andrew four and a half on a scale of one to seven; the second rated him five; and the PowerPoint group rated him six. PowerPoint gave him power. The experiment was repeated, with three groups of sports fans that were accustomed to digesting sports statistics; this time, the first two groups gave Andrew the same rating. But the group that saw the PowerPoint presentation still couldn't resist it. Again, Andrew got a six. PowerPoint seems to be a way for organizations to turn expensive, expert decision-makers into novice decision-makers. "It's frightening," Cialdini says. He always preferred to use slides when he spoke to business groups, but one high-tech company recently hinted that his authority suffered as a result. "They said, 'You know what, Bob? You've got to get into PowerPoint, otherwise people aren't going to respond.' So I made the transfer."

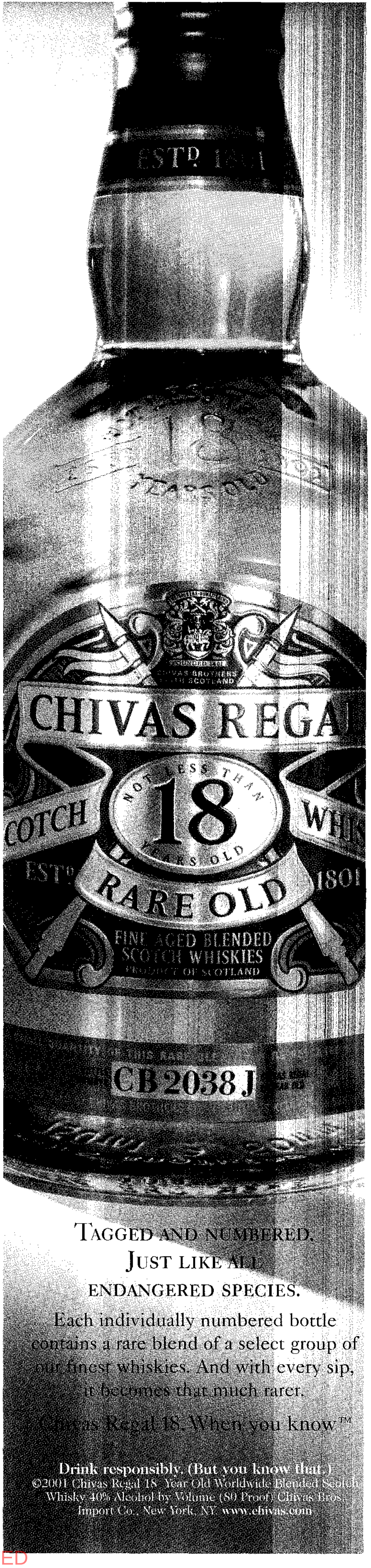
Clifford Nass has an office overlooking the Oval lawn at Stanford, a university where the use of PowerPoint is so widespread that to refrain from using it is sometimes seen as a mark of seniority and privilege, like egg on one's tie. Nass once worked for Intel, and then got a Ph.D. in sociology, and now he writes about and lectures on the ways people think about computers. But, before embarking on any of that, Professor Nass was a professional magician—Cliff Conjure—so he has some confidence in his abilities as a public performer.

According to Nass, who now gives PowerPoint lectures because his students asked him to, PowerPoint "lifts the floor" of public speaking: a lecture is less likely to be poor if the speaker is using the program. "What PowerPoint does is very efficiently deliver content," Nass told me. "What students gain is a lot more information—not just facts but rules, ways of thinking, examples."

At the same time, PowerPoint "lowers the ceiling," Nass says. "What you miss is the process. The classes I remember most, the professors I remember most, were the ones where you could watch how they thought. You don't remember what they said, the details. It was 'What an elegant way to wrap around a problem!' PowerPoint takes that away. PowerPoint gives you the outcome, but it removes the process."

"What I miss is, when I used to lecture without PowerPoint, every now and then I'd get a cool idea," he went on. "I remember once it just hit me. I'm lecturing, and all of a sudden I go, 'God! "The Wizard of Oz"! The scene at the end of "The Wizard of Oz"!' " Nass, telling this story, was almost shouting. (The lecture, he later explained, was about definitions of "the human" applied to computers.) "I just went for it—twenty-five minutes. And to this day students who were in that class remember it. That couldn't happen now: 'Where the hell is the slide?' "

PowerPoint could lead us to believe that information is *all* there is. According to Nass, PowerPoint empowers the provider of simple content (and that was the task Bob Gaskins originally set for it), but it risks squeezing out the provider of process—that is to say, the rhetorician, the storyteller, the poet, the person whose thoughts cannot be arranged in the shape of an AutoContent slide. "I hate to admit this," Nass said, "but I actually removed a book from my syllabus last year because I couldn't figure out how to PowerPoint it. It's a lovely book called 'Interface Culture,' by Steven Johnson, but it's very discursive; the charm of it is the throwaways. When I read this book, I thought, My head's filled with ideas, and now I've got to write out exactly what those ideas are, and—they're not neat." He couldn't get the book into bullet points; every time he put something down, he realized that it wasn't quite right. Eventually, he abandoned the attempt, and, instead of a lecture, he gave his students a recommendation. He told them it was a good book, urged them to read it, and moved on to the next bullet point. ♦



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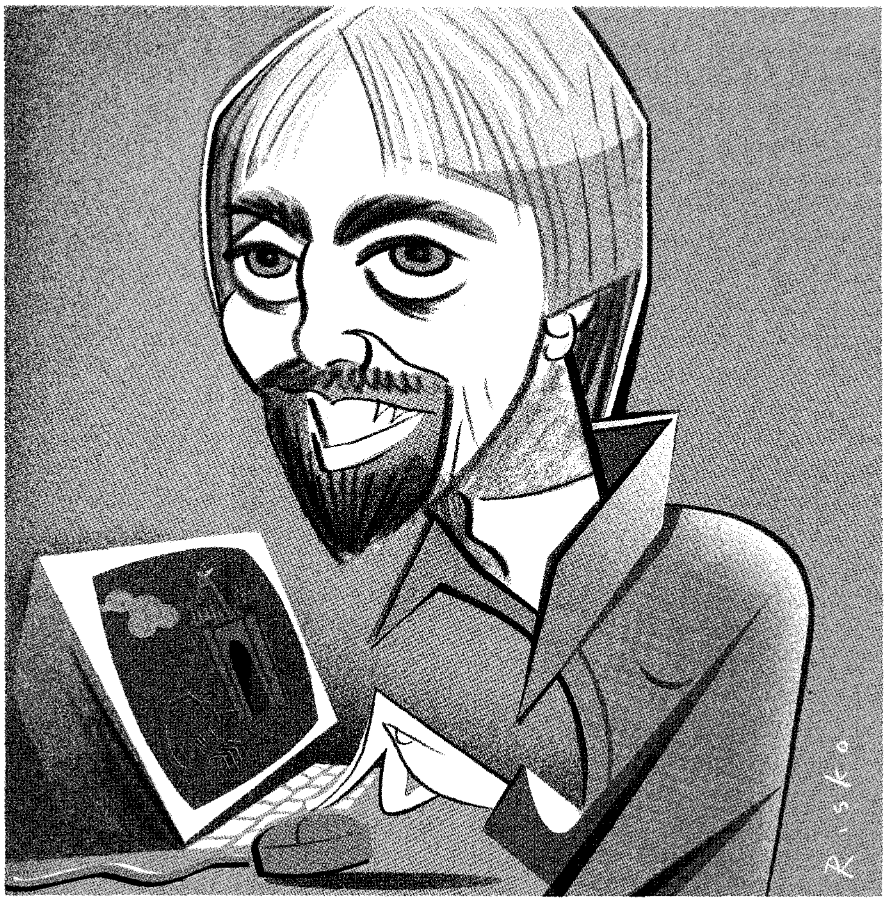
PIMPS AND DRAGONS

How an online world survived a social breakdown.

BY ELIZABETH KOLBERT



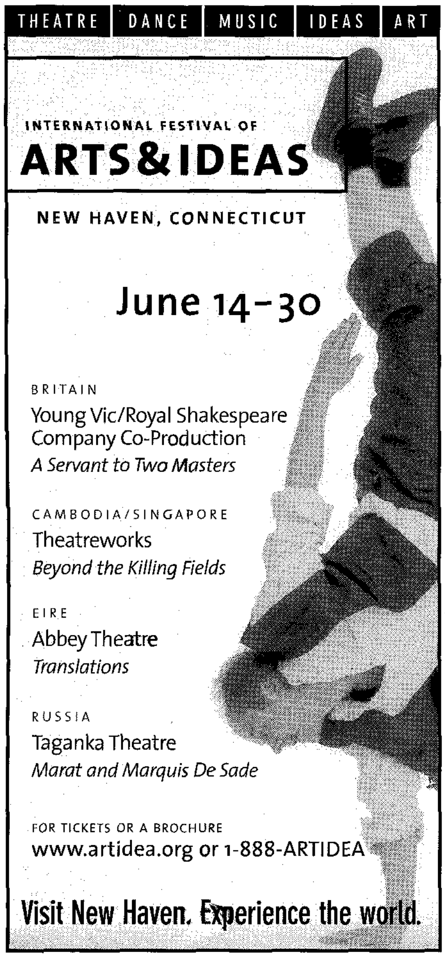
Richard Garriott, Ultima's creator, didn't foresee the crime wave or the real-estate boom.

ROBERT RISKO

Maps of Britannia show a boomerang-shaped island with the cities of Minoc and Vesper at the northern end, Britain and Yew in the middle, and Trinsic in the south. The kingdom, which is stuck somewhere between the sixth and the twelfth centuries, has a single unit of currency, a gold piece that looks a little like a biscuit. A network of servers is supposed to keep track of all the gold, just as it keeps track of everything else on the island, but in late 1997 bands of counterfeiters found a bug that allowed them to reproduce gold pieces more or less at will. The fantastic wealth they produced for themselves was, of course, entirely imaginary, and yet it led, in textbook fashion, to hyperinflation. At the worst point in the crisis, Britannia's monetary system virtually collapsed, and players all over the kingdom were reduced to bartering.

Ever since Pong, at once goofy and mesmerizing, reached the mass market, back in the mid-seventies, electronic gaming has moved ahead at an improbable speed. Now, between the sales of consoles and those of software, it is a business larger than Hollywood. Meanwhile, the games themselves have become faster, smarter, meaner, and, in the case of Ultima Online, more outlandish.

A "massively multi-player online role-playing game," or, only slightly less awkwardly, an M.M.P.O.R.P.G., Ultima Online is managed and operated by Origin Systems, a gaming company based in Austin, which charges sub-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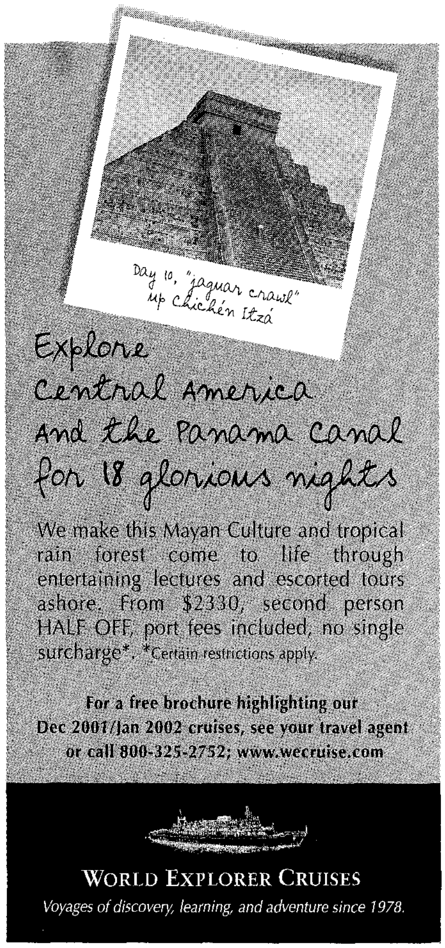
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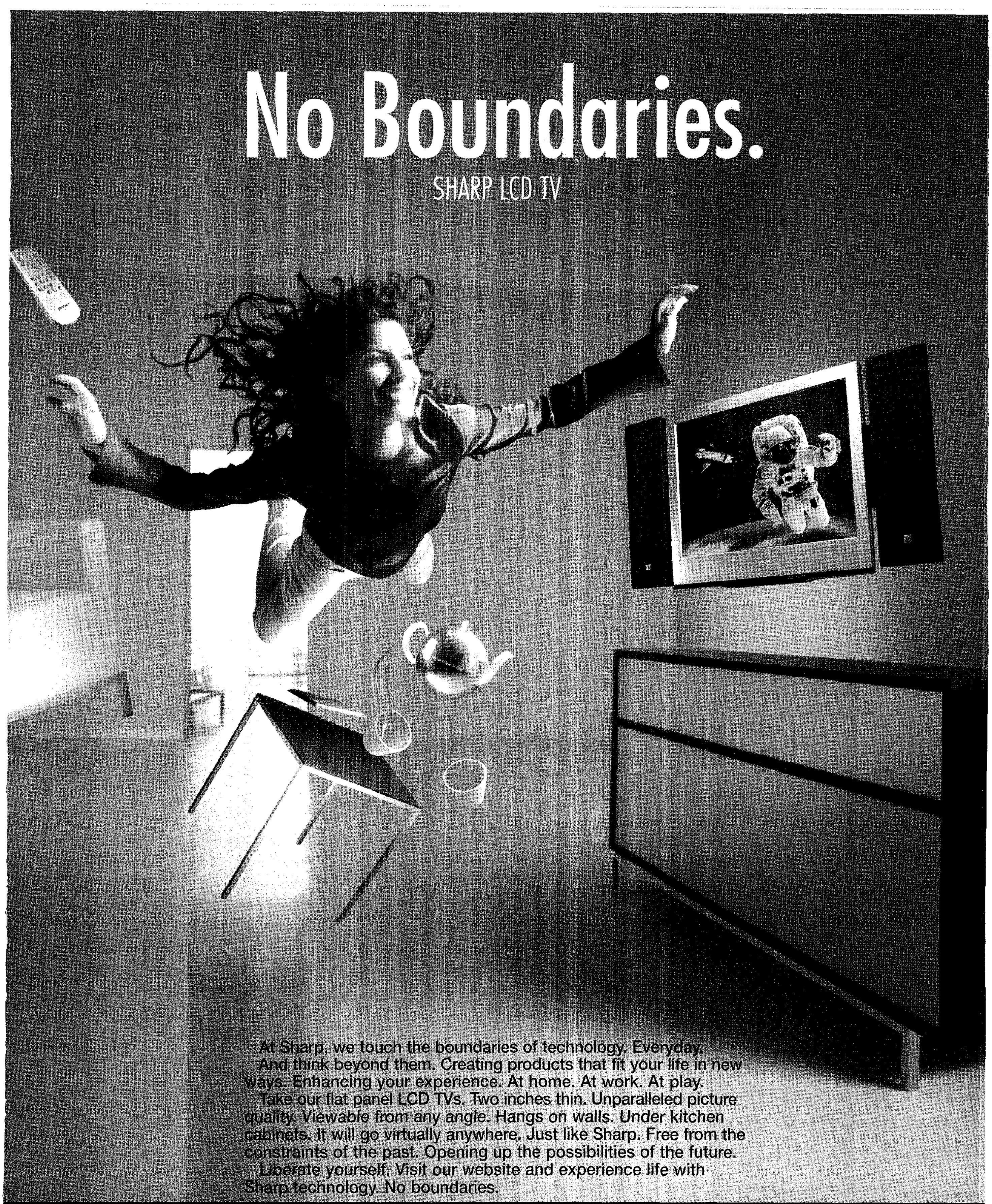

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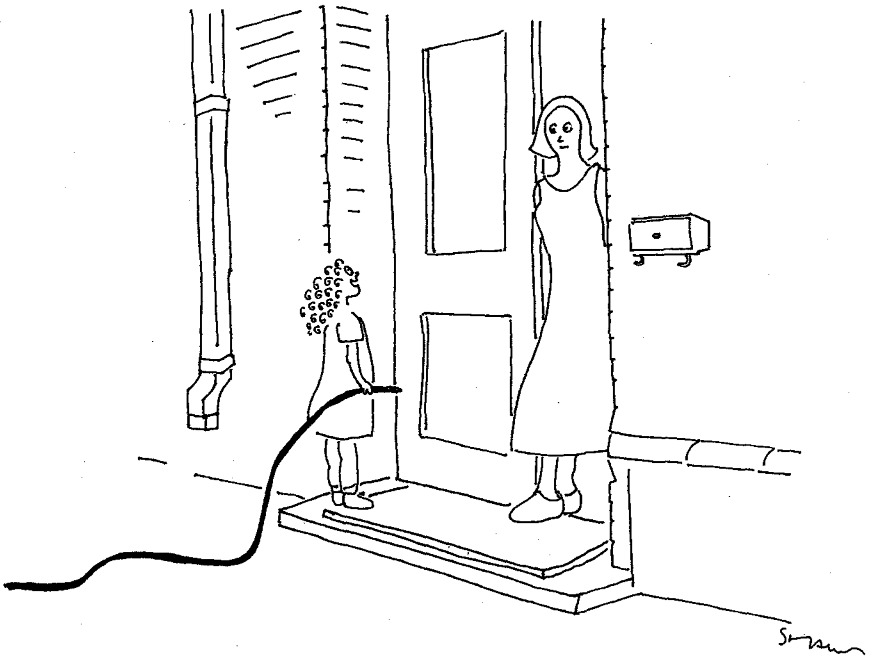


"Look, Mom! A broadband digital subscriber line followed me home. Can we keep it?"

• •

scribers nine ninety-five a month to maintain a character, or "avatar," in Britannia. Players manipulate tiny two-dimensional figures who move jerkily through a computer-generated landscape of spells and dragons and ridable ostriches. The game has no beginning and no end, and there is no way to win or lose, although it is possible to be killed. Nearly a quarter of a million people subscribe, and each player logs an average of thirteen hours a week, meaning that in the course of a year Ultima absorbs more than a hundred and sixty million man-hours.

Ultima's appeal is clearly that of an escapist fantasy, yet the most striking feature of the game's brief history is its perversely recurrent social realism. In its original design, the game gave players a choice of professions: they could train their avatars in any of some three dozen fields, ranging from archery and alchemy to animal taming. No sooner was U.O. up and running than a player introduced a new line of work by operating two characters, one named Jenny and the other Pimp Daddy. On top of hyperinflation, Britannia has suffered a wave of extinctions, paralyzing hoarding, and a crime problem so intractable that at one point the game was forced to, in effect, split itself in half. Considered as an inadvertent and largely unsupervised experiment, U.O. raises questions about whether people can manage to coexist peacefully even when they don't really exist.

After the counterfeiting bug was fixed, members of Origin's staff decided that they needed to shrink the money supply by retiring gold from the system. Among the various schemes that they tried was holding an auction for a special kind of red hair dye. Players—their characters, anyway—lined up for hours, partitions had to be built to keep the crowds in line, and eventually guards were summoned to prevent a riot. Apart from its attraction as a status symbol, the red hair dye had, even within the fiction of the game, no value whatever.

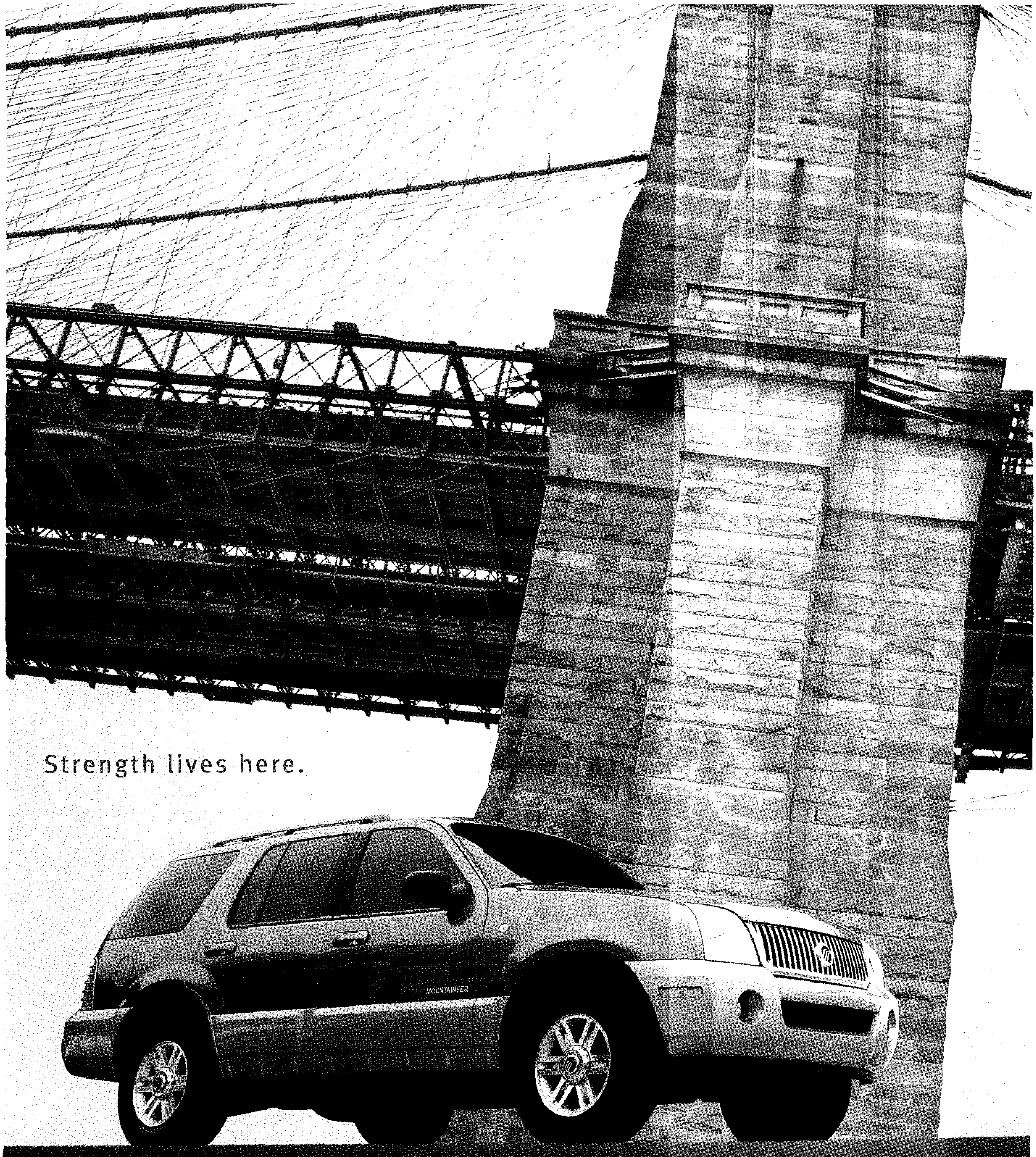
Lord British wears a silver crown and a gray tunic with a silver serpent emblazoned on the chest. As the ruler of Britannia, he has been a frequent target of protest; at one point, hundreds of disgruntled citizens stripped down to their underwear, broke into his castle, and stood around shouting (well, typing) profanities. Lord British has the power to make himself invulnerable; once, when he forgot to do so, he wound up dead.

Lord British is the handle of Richard Garriott, Origin's founder. Garriott sold the company to Electronic Arts, the computer-games giant, in 1992, for thirty million dollars, but he continued to work there until last spring, when, as a result of what could broadly be described as creative differences, he and Electronic Arts parted ways. I happened to visit him one morning just as his year-long non-compete agreement with Electronic Arts was about to expire, and he was preparing to formally launch yet another computer-gaming company. His phone rang almost continuously.

Garriott, who is thirty-nine, is tall and lanky, with blondish hair and two very long, very thin braids that hang, like tails, down his back. He designed his own house, which sits high up on a hill not far from Origin's offices, in north Austin. It has a network of secret passageways, a rooftop observatory, a dungeon with a real human skeleton, and a scuba-diving pool equipped with faucets that issue hot and cold running rain. Garriott collects old toys, and armor, and fossils, and models of the solar system, and a lot of other things that are not so easily categorized, like a lunar-soil collector called Lunakod 21, which is still on the moon and which the Russians sold him, several years ago, for sixty thousand dollars. It is his dream to make a space voyage himself one day—his father, Owen, is a retired astronaut—and, to this end, he has travelled to Moscow several times for weightlessness training. Next spring, he is planning a submarine trip to the ocean floor beneath the ice cap at the North Pole.

Ultima Online grew out of a series of computer games that Garriott began designing when he was a student at the University of Texas. The first, which he finished in 1980, was called Akalabeth; it came on a floppy disk and could be played only on an Apple II. Garriott was selling the game in Ziploc bags at a computer store he was working at when a software publisher from California happened upon it. They signed an agreement under which Garriott was to receive five dollars for every copy of the game that was sold. By the time he finished his freshman year, he had made a hundred and fifty thousand dollars. A year later, he dropped out of school.

Like many other computer-driven medieval-fantasy games, Akalabeth



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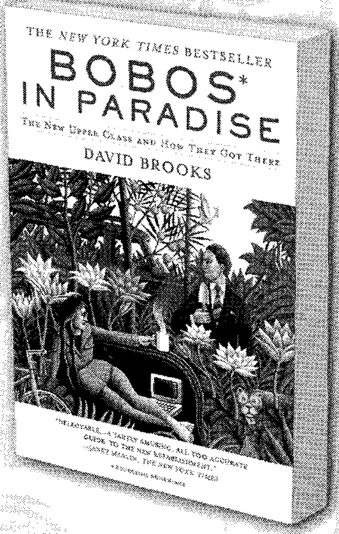
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drew heavily on Dungeons & Dragons, which for its part had drawn on "The Lord of the Rings." Garriott describes himself as deeply influenced by Tolkien, who, as he points out, took an extremely rigorous view of make-believe. "It's incredibly important for me to know much more detail about my fictional worlds than ever comes out," he told me, once we had settled in his office, which is appointed with a Japanese cosmonaut's suit. "That's the only way to give it internal consistency and integrity and build something that is believable."

Nine successors to Akalabeth followed, called, collectively, the Ultima Series. In each of the games, a player navigates through various perils to help Lord British save the world from various evils. In Ultima V, for example, subtitled "Warriors of Destiny," the player encounters a tribe of nasty-looking aliens who turn out, in the end, to be trying to protect their kingdom from the destruction that the player himself has wrought. Finishing a game takes from fifty to a hundred hours, depending on a player's experience and ability.

In keeping with Garriott's Tolkienism, Ultima Online is also extraordinarily detailed, down to its most banal features. Players can design clothes for their avatars; they can have pets and train them to do tricks; and they can construct elaborate houses, which, if they have the wherewithal, they can decorate with paintings and rugs and candelabra and tchotchkes. They "talk" to one another by typing—the words appear suspended above the characters' heads—and they tend to use a combination of pseudo Middle English and computerese, slipping from "thee" and "thou" to "LOL" (Laughing out loud) and "WTF" (What the fuck?).

Many familiar elements of the Ultima Series, like Lord British, reappear in Ultima Online, but the logic of the enterprise is inverted. In place of the goal-driven narratives of the earlier games is an open-endedness that leaves the player free to do pretty much whatever he pleases—slay dragons, raise the dead, or make shirts. U.O. features a kind of fishing, which involves gripping a virtual pole and clicking on some virtual water. (Virtual fish bite according to a fixed algorithm.) The activity has proved extremely popular.

As Garriott pointed out to me, U.O. is one of the few unambiguously profitable uses of the Internet, other than pornography. Still, moving the game online has not been without its costs. In the original Ultima games, the player might have been all alone, but he did get to be the hero. In U.O., the player has to struggle for recognition. "Playing a virtual-world game takes some getting used to," Garriott told me. "You have to realize that the world is what you make of it. Unfortunately, that means most likely you're going to have a relatively mediocre life."

Britannia has some thirty "game masters," who work in round-the-clock shifts out of a large room on the third floor of Origin's headquarters. The room has two rows of carrels, and each carrel is outfitted with two computers. Three-quarters of the game masters are young men, and they seem to subsist mainly on cigarettes and litre-sized cups of soda. One day, I spent several hours in the room, sitting next to the young man who plays Game Master Quinnly. Game Master Quinnly wears a red robe and tries to remain courtly even under difficult circumstances. "Hail, I'm GM Quinnly," he told one young knight accused of killing a friend and then looting his corpse. "GMs suck ass," the knight responded.

Queries come into the game masters' queue from all over the world—"*Ich sitze hier in Jail und weiss nicht weiter*" was one that I saw—and on every conceivable topic. Often, players accuse each other of "macroing"—operating a character on an automatic program, which is against the rules—or of exploiting bugs in the programming to circumvent the game's limitations. There were complaints of harassment and stealing and scamming and also several reports of foul language—for example, "A guy named Sebell called me a faggot," and "Feodoric is continuing to call me a bedwetter"—which is another violation of game protocol.

Running the game masters' room is a big expense for Origin and, to a large degree, an unanticipated one. Britannia was supposed to be self-policing, but instead it kept veering toward anarchy. Early on, more experienced players figured out how to identify new characters, or, as they are called, "newbies." In addition to being unfamiliar with the land-

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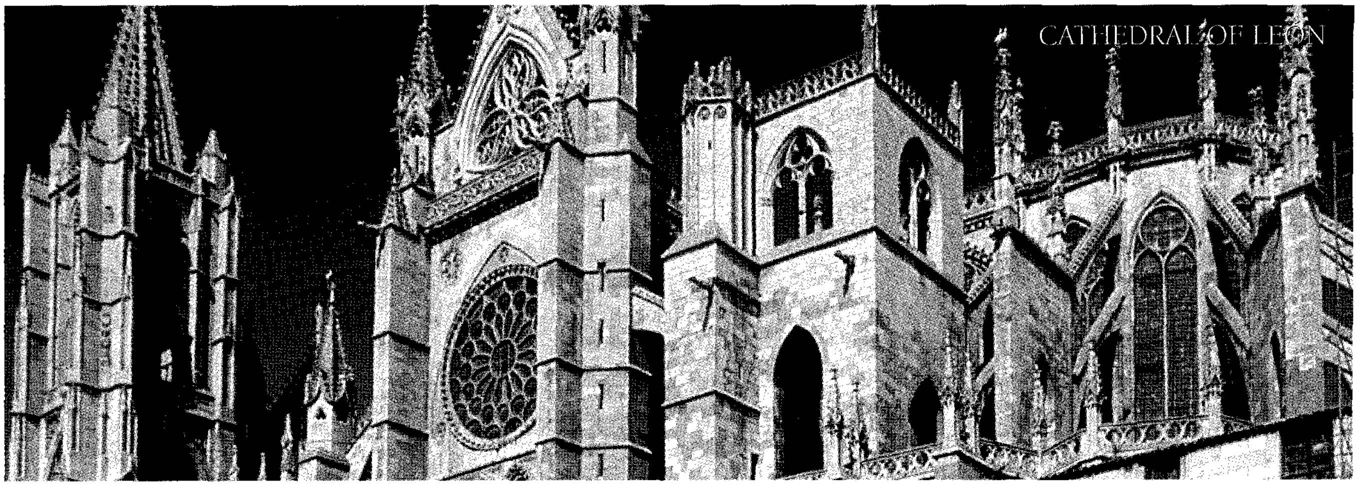

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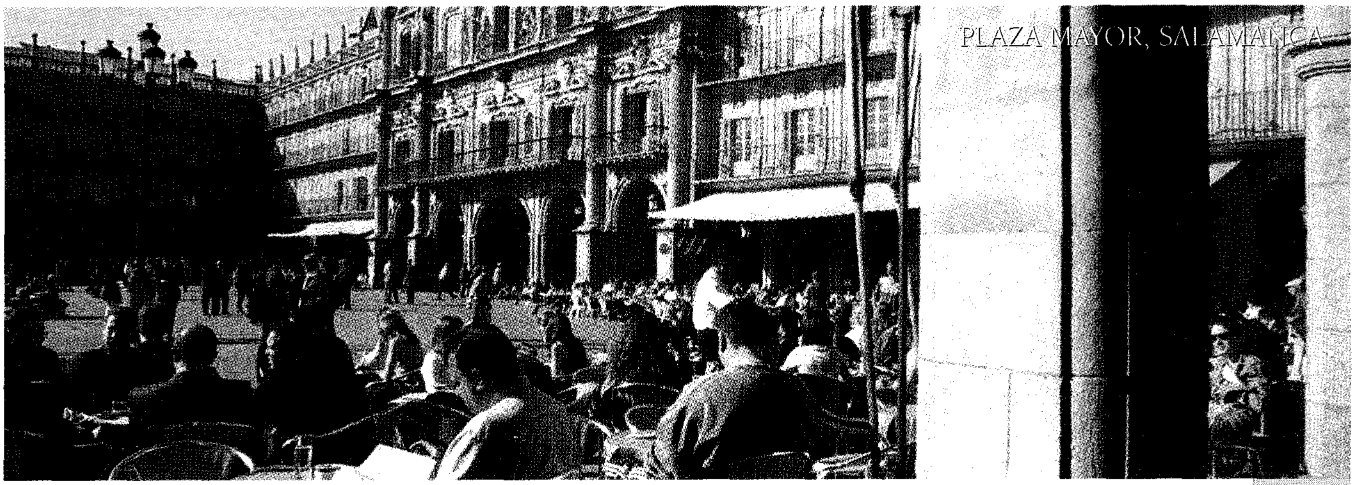

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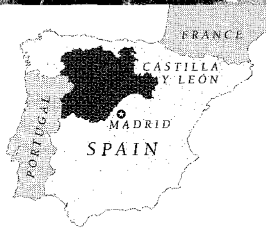

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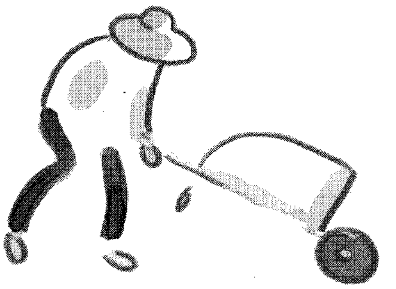
scape, newbies cannot defend themselves against older characters who have had more time to collect skill points. Some players were luring newbies out into the woods, beyond the protection of the town guards, and killing them; others were encouraging newbies to commit crimes, and then letting the guards kill them. The result was a lot of players whose experience of the game consisted mostly of being dead, a condition that discouraged them from continuing to pay their monthly fees.

In response to the slaughter, U.O.'s designers introduced the "notoriety" system—a version of "Megan's law." The server was reprogrammed to note when one character killed another and to gradually turn a murderer's name—characters' names appear above their heads—from very blue to very red. The problem with the notoriety system was that player-killers, or PKs, soon figured out a way to foil it. Killing a player-killer was considered by the servers to be not a bad deed but a good one, so PKs paired up to do each other in. The more times they did this, the bluer their names became. "You'd see this person and you'd go, 'Hey, it's Mother Teresa,' and then he'd stab you in the back," one of the designers of the system told me.

"Notoriety" was subsequently modified to "reputation," a system similar to that used on eBay, by which victims could rate their murderers. The problem with this system was that everyone handed out murder counts, no matter what the circumstances of the killing. (Dead characters can be resurrected by characters skilled in healing.) The counts eroded over time, so PKs were keeping their characters logged on, doing nothing, as a form of self-imposed jail time. Eventually, a bounty system was introduced, but this, too, proved vulnerable to manipulation: PKs would have their friends kill them and split the bounty.

Finally, last year, U.O. gave up on the notion of self-policing. Britannia these days exists in two parallel versions, or "facets"—Felucca, where killing other players is O.K., and Trammel, where, except under very limited circumstances, it is not. Four-fifths of all players choose Trammel.



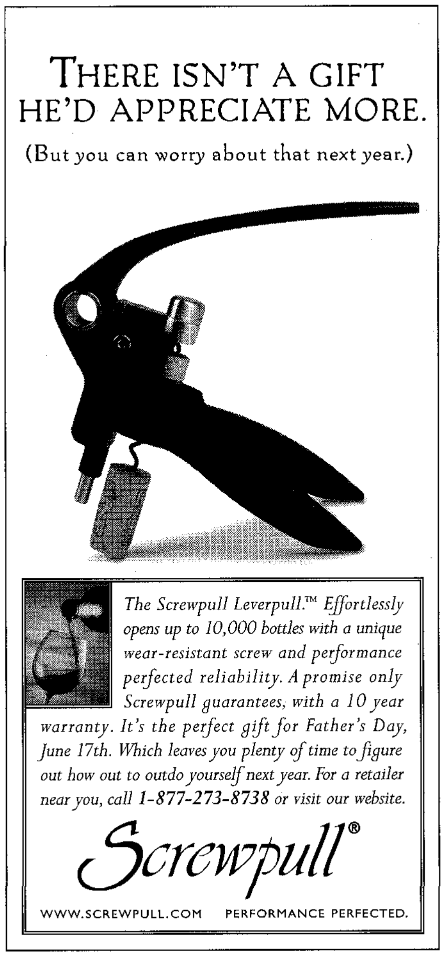
The facet system has succeeded in reducing unwanted player-versus-player violence, but, if the time I spent with the game masters is any indication, it has certainly not eliminated it. One complaint received by Game Master Quinnly concerned a character named Gaudemus, who, it was reported, was sicking his dragon on other characters. (Dragons can be tamed and kept as pets.) Quinnly hastened to the scene:

GAUDEMUS: WTF.
GM QUINNLY: Let's discuss your releasing dragons to kill other players.
GAUDEMUS: That's illegal.
GM QUINNLY: Quite.
GAUDEMUS: I released it because I don't want it. It was a crappy dragon.
GM QUINNLY: I am releasing you on this warning.

One night in Austin, I went out to dinner with Raph Koster, U.O.'s former lead designer, and Rich Vogel, the game's former producer. Both now work for Verant, which is owned by Sony and produces EverQuest, U.O.'s main rival. The two are on the development team for a game based on the "Star Wars" fiction, which is scheduled to launch next year. Vogel, who is thirty-two, is tall and fair and reticent; Koster, who is twenty-nine, is short and dark and voluble. The restaurant that we went to served American cuisine, and was decorated, somewhat incongruously, as a ski lodge, with snowshoes on the wall and a fire roaring in the hearth.

Austin these days is a major high-tech center—the direct flight between the city and San Jose, California, is referred to as the "nerd bird"—and it has become a hub of electronic gaming. The city's gaming world is a close one, whose inhabitants all seem to have one another's numbers programmed into their cell phones.

Like almost everyone else I met who had been associated with U.O., Vogel and Koster referred to themselves as "gamers," by which they seemed to mean not just that they liked to play computer games but that they didn't really see them as games. Koster was an aficionado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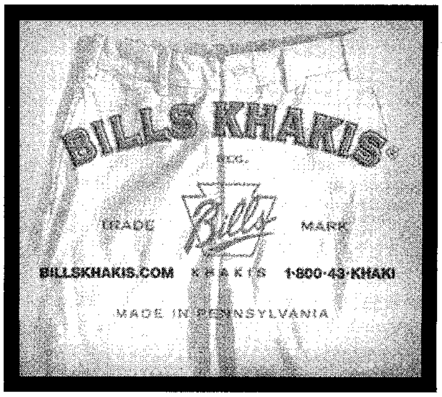

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of MUDs, or multi-user dungeons, while Vogel had been an early addict of a game called Dragon's Gate, which operated on the computer service Genie and was billed on a per-hour basis. When his habit was at its height, Vogel told me, he had run up bills of several hundred dollars a month.

U.O. took more than two years to design, and, according to Koster, who joined the development team in 1995, a great deal of that time went into trying to perfect what was known as the "resource system." Under this system, both natural and man-made objects were coded according to the imaginary resources that went into them—a sheep, for example, was a couple of units of meat and a couple of units of wool—and the total pool of each resource was fixed, so that there would always be a certain amount of meat in the world and a certain amount of wool. One of the goals of the system was to produce a naturalistic and therefore dynamic environment: the sheep would get eaten by wolves, and as the wolf population grew the sheep would decline.

The resource system had many features that participants in the early tests of the game found cool. "Players really liked seeing the wolves attack the sheep," Koster said. "If wolves stayed alive a long time, they got cannier and stronger and smarter and deadlier, so you'd run into these old grizzled wolves that had been around the block. These wolves would eat sheep even if there were no players nearby. They were actually living out their little artificial lives out there."

Even as experienced gamers, Koster and Vogel were taken aback by what happened next. U.O. went live in late September of 1997, and by early October Britannia was on the brink of environmental collapse. "The creatures had all gone extinct, because people had hunted them out completely," Koster recalled. "The land was completely deforested, so no more wood was growing anywhere. And all the mines had been mined out." Players even assembled teams to hunt down some particularly cunning wolves. "These wolves got to be so deadly that a single player had no chance against them, because we didn't put an upper cap on how smart they could get," Koster said.

Under the resource system, players could gather raw materials, like ore, and make them into finished goods, like armor, which, once used, would begin to break down and reënter the pool as raw materials. Players, it turned out, liked to make things—they were turning out hundreds, and even thousands, of swords and shields and gauntlets—but instead of using them, or throwing them out, which would have had the same effect, they hoarded them. One player reportedly had a collection of ten thousand identical shirts. The result was that there were hardly any materials available to replenish the pool, which deepened the environmental crisis.

At first, the design team tried to deal with the situation by funnelling in more resources, but these, too, were quickly grabbed and hoarded. No one could figure out how to keep the game going without giving up on the system: in the virtual world, as in the real one, economic growth and ecological stability can be tragically difficult to reconcile.

Now the game is programmed so that the servers continually add more ore and sheep and wolves to the landscape. This largesse has solved the mass-extinction problem, but not the hoarding, which continues, contributing to server lag. Why players hold on to so many essentially useless items remains a mystery. When I asked Koster about it, he said, "Why do you have all the junk you have?"

The first time I visited Britannia, I went as Gudrun, a young archer. Like all players, I got to choose many of my avatar's features upon creating her. I gave her a peaches-and-cream complexion, blond pigtails, and a not very medieval miniskirt. Not long after Gudrun arrived in the kingdom, she met Dark Wolf.

Dark Wolf was wearing a red robe and carrying a long sword. He bought Gudrun some shoes, and also a suit of leather armor, which, when she put it on, turned out to be a tight-fitting affair halfway between a cuirass and a bustier. It was unclear to me whether Dark Wolf was expressing simple fellow-feeling for Gudrun or something harder to satisfy. Because Gudrun was an archer, she came equipped with a bow and a bunch of arrows. Being young, she was not a very good archer; nevertheless, with Dark Wolf's assistance she managed to kill some poor hapless hart. "U were great," Dark Wolf told her.

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Britannia operates on the principle that doing is improving, and so the most skillful characters are, almost by definition, the ones who have been playing the longest. On the island of Moonglow, Gudrun met a knight named Roy, who seemed to have a lot of experience but claimed to have just started playing earlier that week. She asked him how he had been able to become so skilled in so short a time. "In the last couple of days, I've been sick, heh, heh, heh," he replied.

As Gudrun, I never managed to lose my newbie status, and I spent a lot of time wandering around, trying to figure out what I was supposed to be doing. Other characters were constantly offering to trade things with me—every character starts out with a thousand gold pieces—or inviting me home with them, or asking me to join their "party," which meant that I could communicate with them through special channels, and also, somewhat less appealingly, that they could loot my corpse if the opportunity arose. But being a member of a party often just seemed to mean not knowing what to do as a member of a group. I found the game at once mildly addictive and boring, like the dances I used to go to in high school.

Ever since electronic multi-player role-playing games first appeared, in the form of multi-user dungeons, back in the late seventies, there has been much speculation about what draws people to them. Richard Bartle, an Englishman who might be described as the Claude Lévi-Strauss of the MUD world, once proposed a four-part typology, dividing players into "socializers," "achievers," "explorers," and "killers." Even though U.O., with a quarter of a million subscribers, is two or three orders of magnitude larger than even the most populous MUD, Bartle's scheme fits the game pretty well.

As time has passed, community-oriented players have introduced into Britannia a wide variety of ordinary, not to say humdrum, social rituals. They organize pet shows and comedy nights, put on amateur theatricals, and regularly hold disco parties in the dungeons. Marriages are commonplace in the game, and when a player dies in real life a funeral is usually held for his avatar; players leave virtual flowers on the virtual grave. In Austin, over and over again I was told

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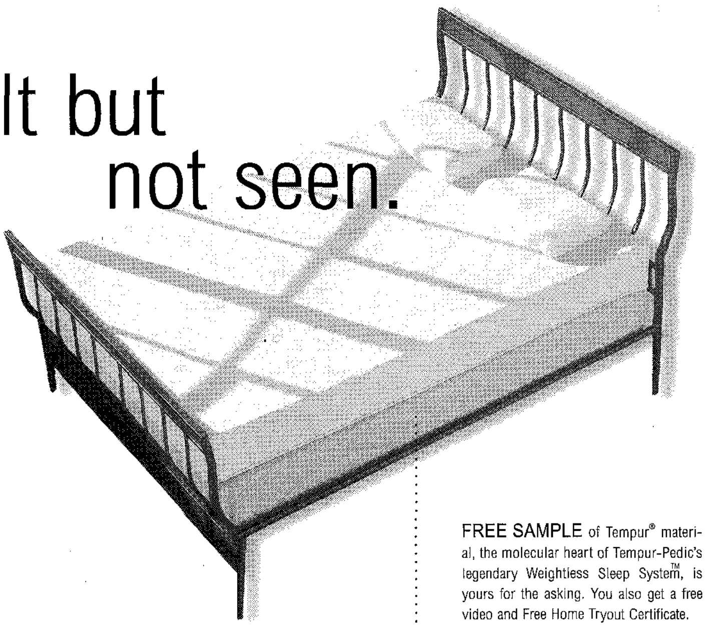

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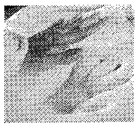

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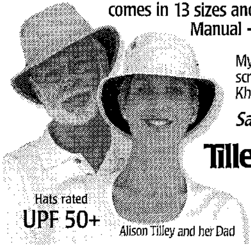

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stories of friends who meet in the taverns of Vesper and Trinsic to do nothing more remarkable than pretend to drink beer and pretend to play chess.

The game's achievers, for their part, have managed to produce an overheated, almost Hamptons-esque real-estate market. Buildable lots are scarce—in some areas unobtainable—and such is the demand for mansionettes that it has spilled out of Britannia. On any given day, eBay has a couple of thousand auctions running of U.O. homes and other paraphernalia. Recently, I saw on the auction site an enormous castle for sale in Trammel that had received twenty-two bids and was going for eight hundred dollars.

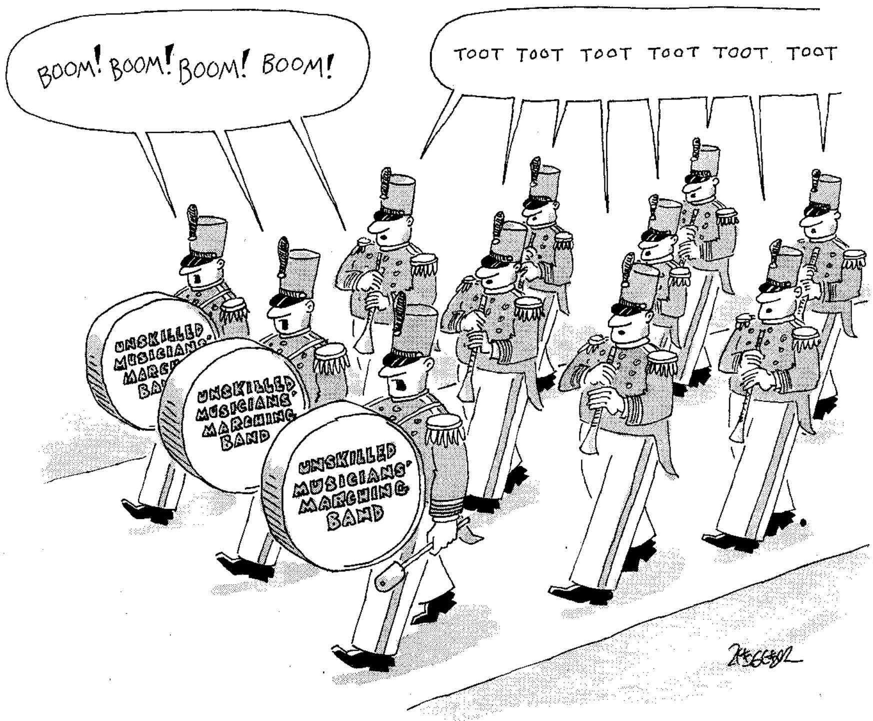
The killers, meanwhile, have not confined themselves to killing. They've organized themselves into murderous factions and extortion rackets. Origin discourages those under thirteen from playing the game, but one eight-year-old girl found a way in and, as the company learned later from her irate mother, took as a pet a cat, which another player skinned.

To the extent that Bartle's typology is clarifying about U.O., however, it reveals how peculiarly conflicted the enterprise is. If conventional games have an overarching ambition, it is to define the competition in such a way as to avoid the sort of messy, emotional uncertainties that characterize life on the outside. U.O. and other role-playing games have the reverse effect, forcing players to fight again and again over what the game is really about. "The hatred that some socializers bear for killers admits no bounds," Bartle once observed.

In this sense, U.O. is, for all its evident silliness, essentially serious: a game with inherent moral complexity. And it is this, perhaps, that keeps the socializers, the achievers, the explorers, and the killers all engaged. In U.O., you never know whether the other players you encounter are there for the fun of making friends or for the fun of murdering them.

U.O. has been in operation for nearly four years now, which makes it the oldest surviving game of its type. Its rivals were still in the production phase during its worst moments and, not surprisingly, profited from its mistakes. EverQuest, for example, which takes place in a similar ersatz-medieval setting, has clearer rules about violence, offers players a sharper sense of purpose, and now has a hundred thousand more subscribers.

Certainly hyperinflation and mass extinction are not, while they are happening, a lot of fun, and U.O.'s designers acknowledge the commercial costs of the game's many crises. At the same time, they seem as a group proud, in a Jurassic Park sort of way, of what has gone wrong. Starr Long, the co-creator of U.O., remembered his own reaction when he learned prostitution had been introduced: "Awesome!"


BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!
TOOT TOOT TOOT TOOT TOOT TOOT
UNSKILLED MUSICIANS' MARCHING BAND
UNSKILLED MUSICIANS' MARCHING BAND
UNSKILLED MUSICIANS' MARCHING BAND

On all Origin business cards and stationery appears the slogan "We Create Worlds." One possible justification for this self-important claim is the way so many people live through their avatars, getting married and putting on pet shows and hanging out in bars online rather than in real life. But what makes the game's social dysfunction so compelling is that it cannot be explained by anything as simple as the desire for a happier world. The mark of a true simulation is that it produces something unwanted, yet recognizable, which is why to lose control has to be, finally, the creative goal of any project like U.O.

On the last night that I was in Austin, Garriott held a party on an enormous piece of land that he owns just down the hill from his house, on the banks of the Colorado River. He is planning to build a new home on the property, which is going to be at least five times the size of the old one and will have a moat. By the time I got to the party, it was dark, and there was a sliver of a moon hanging over the river. Somebody had built a bonfire that was sending sparks in all directions.

The party was billed as a "wake" for Origin, which is not actually disappearing but is being absorbed ever more completely into Electronic Arts. Just a week earlier, the parent company had cancelled a game known informally at Origin as U.O.2, citing fears that the new game would end up competing with the original U.O. Electronic Arts had laid off U.O.2's development staff, of more than fifty people, and most of them, it seemed, were at the party. I couldn't tell whether the event was an expression of morbid fun or another reflection of the gaming world's perverse optimism, but, whichever it was, the mood was upbeat. No one I spoke to appeared terribly concerned about finding a new job, and perhaps with good reason. I hung around for a while listening to Garriott theorize about the future of the gaming industry, and then I headed back up the hill to my rental car, past the bonfire, now cheerfully consuming a seven-foot-high stack of useless U.O.2 documents. ♦

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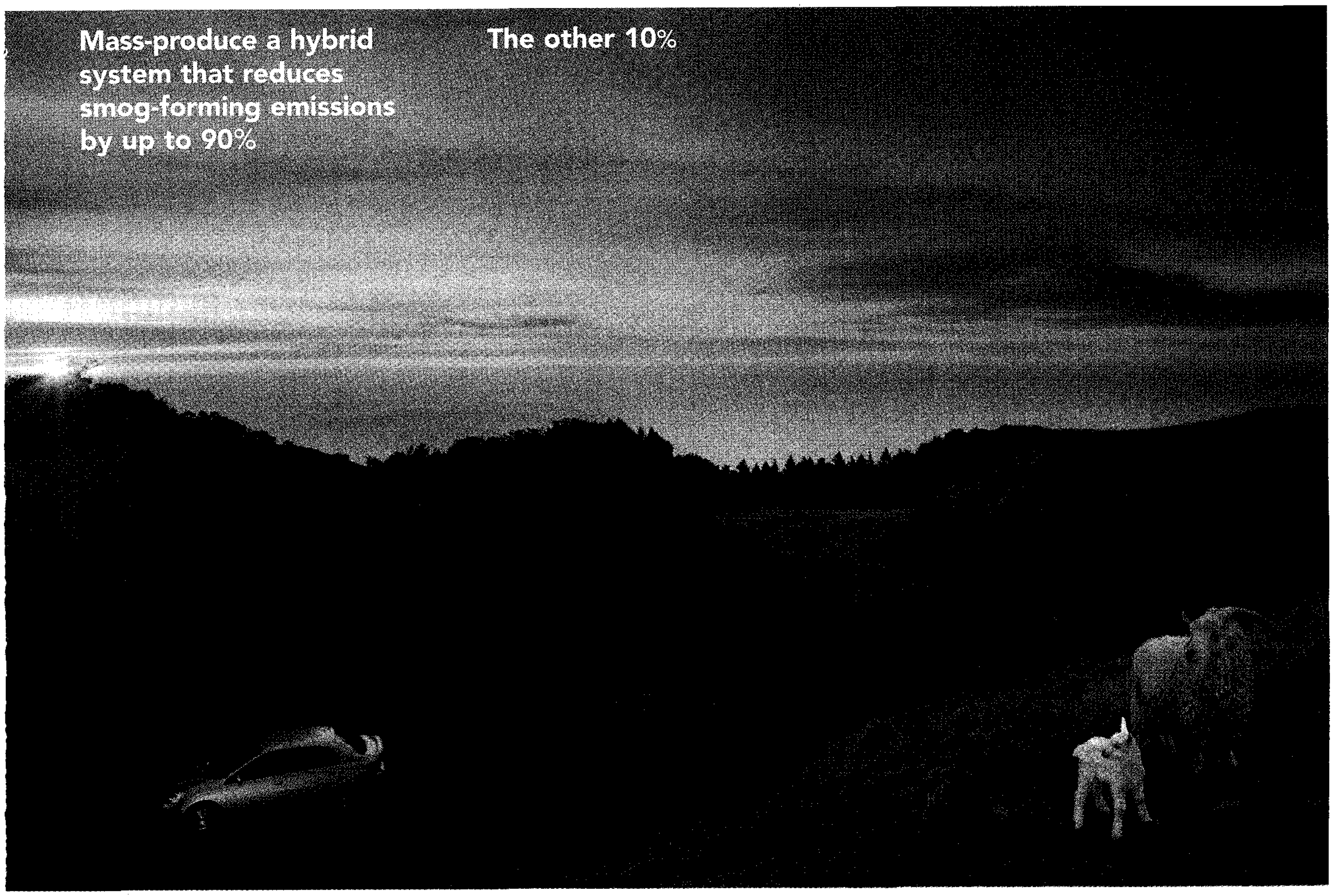
Mass-produce a hybrid system that reduces smog-forming emissions by up to 90%
The other 10%

In 1997, Toyota was the first car company in the world to mass-produce a hybrid vehicle. By combining gasoline and electric power, the Prius reduces smog-forming emissions,* cuts gas consumption in half, and, in short, has revolutionized the way cars affect our environment.

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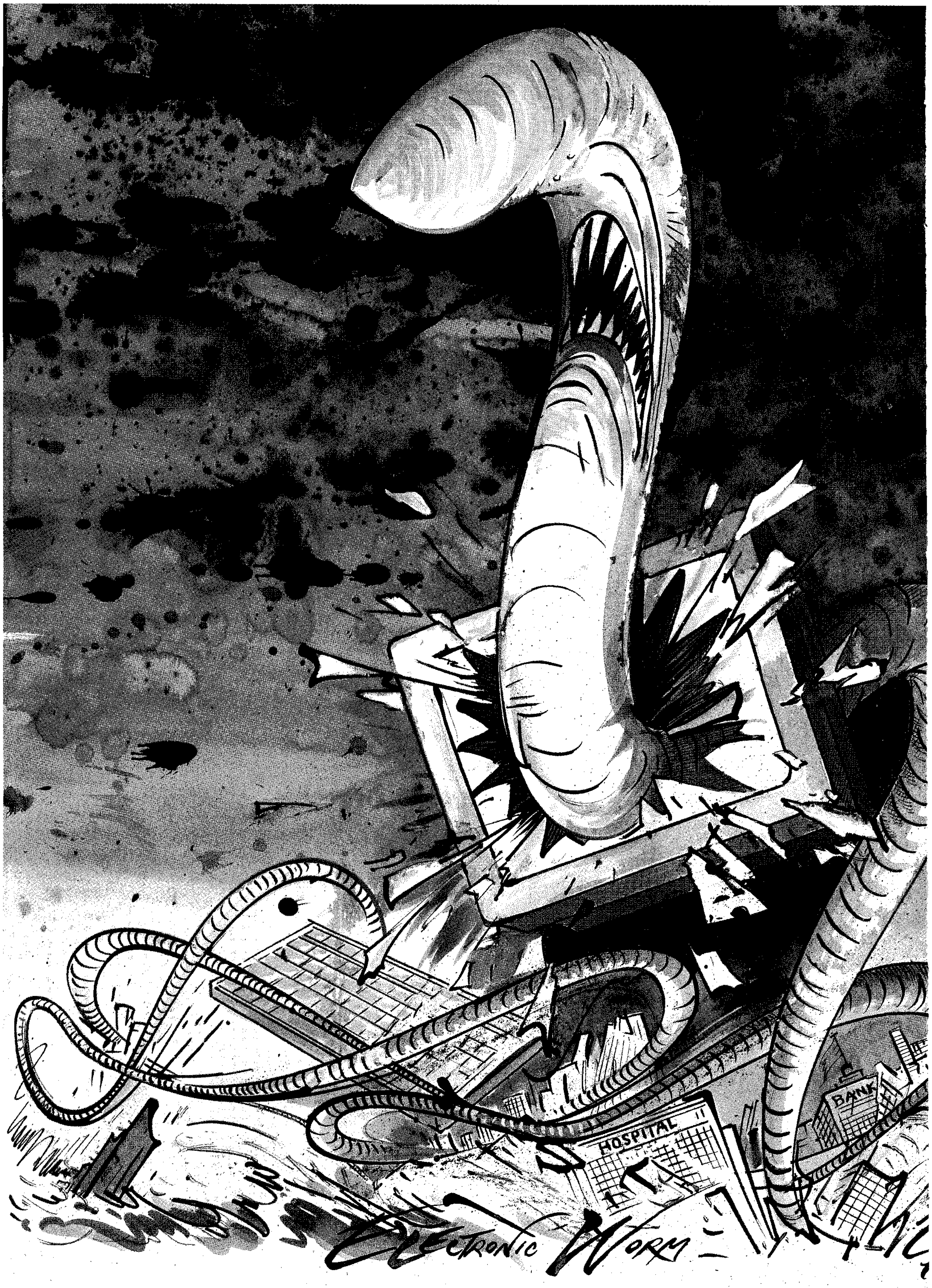
*Based on measurements of hydrocarbons and oxides of nitrogen. Compared to the average car. ©2001


HOSPITAL
BANK
ELECTRONIC WORM

A REPORTER AT LARGE

THE DOOMSDAY CLICK

How easily could a hacker bring the world to a standstill?

BY MICHAEL SPECTER

Like at least several hundred thousand other people around the world, I found a surprise waiting in my E-mail on February 12th. I was in Southern California, and when I turned on my laptop there was a promising message from my wife, who was in Rome. At first glance, nothing seemed amiss: the subject line was slightly mistyped, the body of the message said simply, "Hi Check This!," and all seemed well within the vaguely suspended rules of electronic grammar. A picture of the Russian tennis model Anna Kournikova appeared to be attached to the message. People may argue about her skills on the court, but as a cyberian pinup queen Ms. Kournikova enjoys an uncontested reign.

I opened the mail eagerly—but found no picture. Instead, an electronic worm ripped through my computer. Within thirty seconds, it had worked its way to the inner registry of my hard drive, headed toward my Microsoft Outlook address book, and discharged its viral load onto all eight hundred and forty-seven entries. As a final act, the worm slipped a signature—ONTHEFLY—into my Windows registry (and into every other copy of Windows that it infected), along with enigmatic instructions for the computer to connect itself automatically to a Dutch Web site every year on January 26th.

Because my family and I live in Europe, where this particularly hardy virus began to spread, and my wife's office computer is connected permanently to the Internet, she became a sort of digital Typhoid Mary. She unwittingly took out an entire cluster of computers at the Harvard Medical School, incapacitated laptops owned by the New York *Times*, and caused damage and confusion at film companies, publishing houses, and magazines, as well as among hundreds of acquaintances. The virus, it turned out, was created by a twenty-year-old Dutch student with a particular fondness for Ms. Kournikova, and although it cascaded through the Internet with unusual velocity, the outbreak was hardly unique. In 1999, Melissa quickly became the most widespread virus of its time, infecting more than a million computers. Then, last May, the Love Bug caused a pandemic in cyberspace, striking forty-five million computers in twenty countries and costing billions of dollars in damage.

Harassment by computer viruses has so far been regarded largely as a nuisance. It is rapidly becoming more serious, however, as the world's most critical institutions—banks, hospitals, and governments among them—place their clients' personal details online. The Net was never envisioned as a security vault, and as its importance has grown so have its weaknesses. The federally funded Computer Emergency Response Team, at Carnegie Mellon University, which follows electronic attacks more closely than any other organization does, reported about ten thousand cases of corporate hacking in the United States in 1999 and more than twenty thousand cases in 2000. Those are the ones that we know about; most companies would never speak publicly. As you read this, there are at least fifty thousand computer viruses crawling across the junglelike vines of the World Wide Web, and hundreds more are created each day.

American intelligence officials recently were startled to learn that hackers had broken into the Sandia National Laboratory, in New Mexico, and copied highly classified information from computers there. In the aftermath of the spy-plane collision over the South China Sea, Chi-

ILLUSTRATION BY GERALD SCARFE

"The Internet is waiting for its Chernobyl," one scientist says, "and I don't think we'll be waiting much longer; we are running too close to the edge."

nese hackers struck fiercely at American Web sites, leaving messages like "Hack the USA" and "For our pilot Wang," the latter referring to the fighter pilot who died. Before a truce was declared, early in May, this particular cyberwar had escalated considerably, with hundreds of Web defacements, including some at the White House, the F.B.I., and NASA. (To increase the intensity of the assault, which the F.B.I. said involved "millions" of attempts to break into American sites, the Chinese side assembled an exhaustive archive of the most esoteric hacking tools—at www.cnhonker.com. It remains available to anybody with Web access and Chinese-language skills.)

These are mostly games, of course, but they hint at something more profound: sophisticated terrorists (or hostile governments) now have the ability to crash satellite systems, to wage economic warfare by unplugging the Federal Reserve system from Wall Street, even to disrupt the movements of ships at sea. Electric power plants, water systems, and hospitals—and the thousands of computers that guide ambulances, police dispatch units, fire brigades, and transportation switches—are all becoming susceptible to potentially crippling attacks.

None of that ever bothered me. Not long ago, however, I decided to see for myself what it would take to cause harm on the Internet: to release a virus, crash a computer system, obliterate privacy, and destroy the data that we have come to rely on. I began slowly, by collecting viruses, worms, bugs, and other purely malicious pieces of software as if they were rare butterflies. (The definitions of these creatures vary, but a worm is a tiny program that can copy itself. A virus, although equally damaging, simply infects other programs.) I have two giant hard drives on my computer, and within weeks I had turned one of them into a laboratory for the most dangerous viruses on the Internet: the Melissa virus, Happy99.exe, the Love Bug, among others, are floating around cyberspace, and I have copies of all of them, carefully tucked away on disks, like tarantulas suspended in aspic, or the last archival strains of smallpox.

With help from far more practiced hands, I learned to watch the world's computer traffic glide through the phone lines, or burst in packets of microwave radiation between thousands of switches and servers. It didn't take long for me to see what computer-security experts have known for years: any fool can enter, alter, and destroy even the most seemingly impregnable Web sites. There are dozens of scanner programs on the Internet, which make it possible to stalk the Web for hidden weaknesses. They offer the digital equivalent of sneaking from house to house trying doorknobs to see if the doors are locked. And, if you know what you are doing, you can sit in Rome (or Baghdad, for that matter) and check a few hundred thousand American doorknobs an hour. It's not even against the law. You don't have to know how to write, or even understand, the code to wreck it. And, if you can't get into a site, you can always overwhelm a company simply by inundating it with E-mail messages from so many sources that its computers collapse under the weight of the traffic. The most insidious efforts are often silent: a smart hacker can infiltrate and plant "trapdoors" nearly anywhere, and then return undetected at any time.

"To do this stuff is utterly trivial," Peter G. Neumann, who is a principal scientist at SRI International, the technological consulting firm, told me. "Every other kid can do it, and we know that. That isn't what worries me." Neumann, who is sixty-eight, has worked at and advised many of the nation's most important universities and government institutions, from the Navy and Harvard to the highly secretive National Security Agency. Mostly as a hobby, he moderates a forum on the Internet and produces a running list called "Illustrative Risks to the Public in the Use of Computer Systems and Related Technologies," which is the most frightening collection of random dangers I have ever seen. "What worries me is the big one," Neumann said, as we sat in his office in Menlo Park, California, one day. "People don't like to talk about this, because it's seen as encouraging the enemy, but absolutely everything is riddled with security flaws. Hackers can get into our most important systems in minutes, sometimes in seconds.

"And they do," he added. "The Internet is waiting for its Chernobyl, and I don't think we will be waiting much longer; we are running too close to the edge. When a third of the computer drives in America are wiped out in a single day, when the banking and commerce system is overcome, or the power grids and emergency-response systems of twenty states shut down because of a malicious computer attack, maybe then people will think about what's going on here."

The word "hacker" long ago lost its Yiddish meaning, as a person so inept at making furniture that he might as well do it with an axe. In the late nineteen-sixties and early seventies, it came to signify another sort of person: someone particularly skilled at computer programming, and so delighted to do it that the enterprise became an end in itself. Hackers were noble geeks; they came out only at night, could get into nearly any network, disturb nothing, leave no fingerprints, and move on. It was an important part of their ethic that hackers should do no harm.

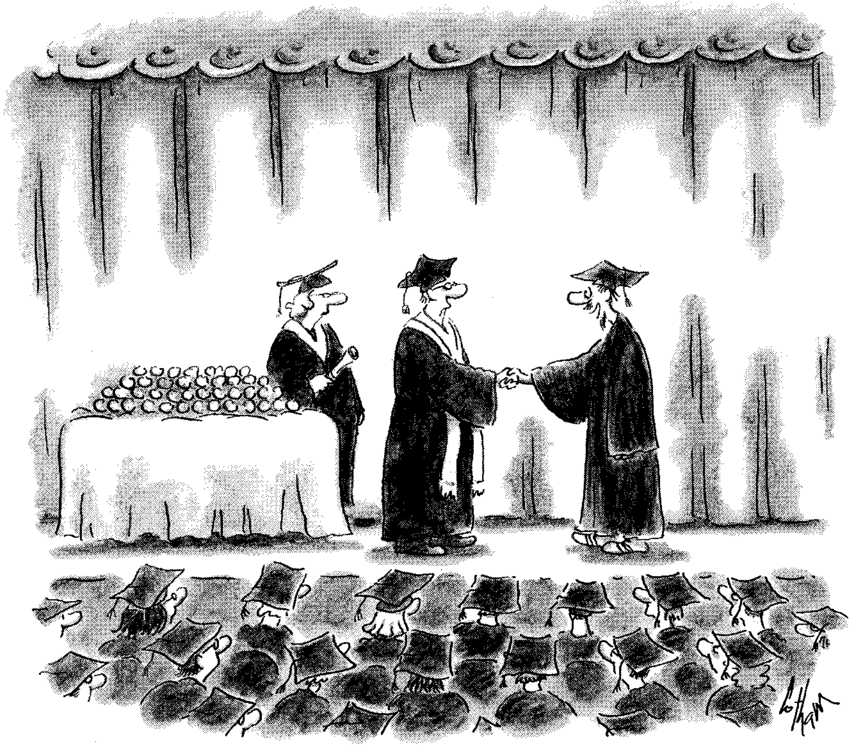
That changed on November 2, 1988, when a graduate student at Cornell named Robert Tappan Morris unwittingly carried out the hack heard round the world, letting slip a worm that shut down ten per cent of all the computers on what would soon be called the Internet. Morris, who today teaches at M.I.T. and whose father was a senior computer-security official at the National Security Agency, had the dubious honor to be among the first Americans convicted under the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act. He has always said that he meant no harm, and the evidence supports him. Nonetheless, Morris's mistake not only infected thousands of networks but completely altered the public view of hackers. Computer people will tell you that the proper term for a person who disturbs the peace of the online universe is "cracker"; but nobody uses it. In the minds of the public, hackers are bad guys.

"You don't hack for harm—you hack for honor," Gerrie Mansur was telling me as we stood in the center of Amsterdam one evening last month, at sunset, watching boatloads of tourists inch their way toward the flower market on the Amstel River. I had gone there, in part, to speak with the man who set loose the Kournikova virus, but also to learn how easy it really would be to spread mischief on the Internet. Gerrie promised to show me. He and his pals Viper and Dimitri collected me at my hotel in a new Volkswagen Lupo that the Internet firm Viper works for had just bought for him. Viper is twenty-one and Dimitri is nineteen, and they consider Gerrie, who is twenty-six, their mentor. Gerrie and Viper live near each other in Haarlem, the provincial capital, north of Amsterdam, and they both wore the iconic hacker uniform: jeans, black leather jacket, Gap-style big T-shirt, and the odd, clunky shoes that have become the signature of a certain type of cool urban male. Dimitri lives in Delft, which is more than an hour away, but, since all three exist mainly online, distance doesn't play a large role in their lives.

Dimitri—his full name is Dimitri Van de Glessen—is a soft-spoken and spindly young man who is all bones, green eyes, spiky red-brown hair, and acne. He made international headlines a few months ago when he hacked the Microsoft corporate servers. He is still angry about the publicity, though, because he feels that he didn't get proper credit. First, he simply broke into one of the main event servers, which are essentially electronic billboards, and added a text file with the words "Hack the planet." Microsoft failed to respond, and Dimitri took that personally. So he went back in, got hold of a password with more significant access to data, and put up an entirely new page on the site that read, "Patching your system is very hard, huh?" He then forwarded the page to journalists, along with the information that he was able to break in through a weakness that Microsoft could have fixed had it bothered to use its own software. That got the company's attention, and in the end Dimitri met with some Microsoft employees, showed them their problem, and all was forgotten. (At least, until his bosses in the Netherlands found out; once his private activities became public, Dimitri was out of a job.)

He didn't seem to mind. He quit school a while ago, and he makes some money doing security for, among other places, a chain of Dutch night clubs. Since he lives with his parents, his cash needs are minimal. Dimitri would be an obvious casting choice for "Revenge of the Nerds"; his home page shows him at a disco hovering triumphantly between two women both of whom are wearing halter tops and big smiles. He looks very much like a young man who has just won the lottery.

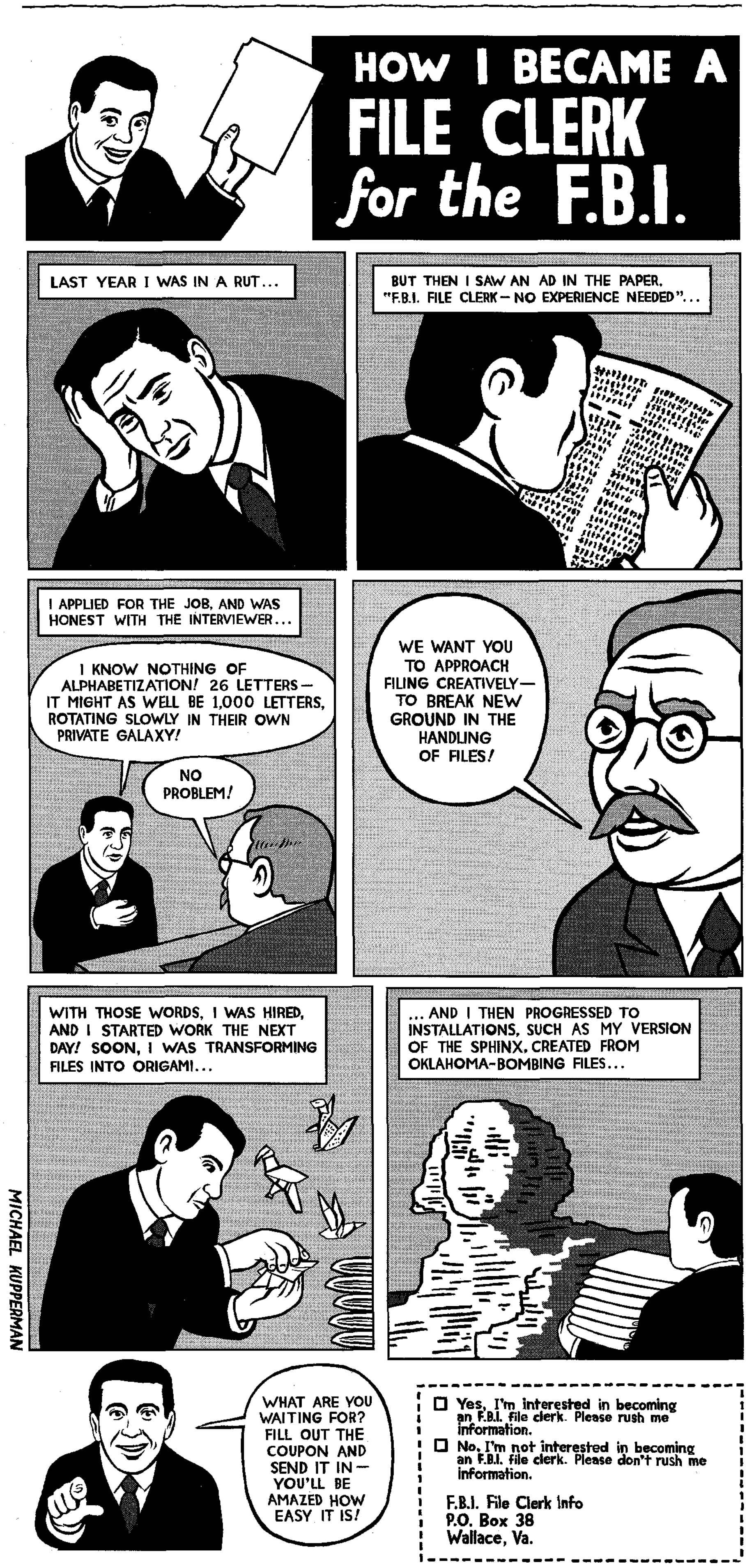
Viper (a cyberspace nom de hack, but the only name he would permit me to print) is more seasoned than Dimitri. Until the week I came to town, his best-known hack was the Beienkorf mall, one of the biggest shopping centers in the Netherlands. "There were sixty thousand open credit cards just sitting there—every piece of information you could possibly want," Viper told me. "I sent the whole database to Gerrie." Gerrie often functions as an information broker in that hazy space between hackers and the hacked. "It was on TV, and one day later that server was secure." Like a lot of hackers, Viper thinks of himself as a kind of Robin Hood, who breaks the law only to sound the alarm. But he also views vulnerable Web sites, particularly those of big corporations, the way a mischievous teen-ager might see an empty convertible with the keys in the ignition.



"To what do I owe this honor?"

A few days before I arrived in Amsterdam, Viper had scored his biggest hack yet. "I was just sniffing around the Web when I saw it," he told me. (In cyberspace, "sniffing" is a technical term. It's how people learn whether a site can be hacked. Think of it as a surveillance flight over enemy territory. There is also anti-sniffing. That's how people listen for the people who are listening; it's a bit like radar.) In April, Viper sniffed out some surprising weaknesses at the corporate servers of Real Networks, the giant Seattle company that streams audio and video services over the Internet to millions of customers. "I went over to real.com and it was absolutely, completely naked," Viper told me, after E-mailing me a file that he said would allow me to enter and alter many programs in the company's customer-service directory. It is one of the peculiarities of theft in cyberspace that you can steal a copy of a file without tipping anyone off or having to disturb the file itself. "Every person—name, phone number, address. Anything those idiots at real.com thought was worth having I have," Viper said. "E-mail. Real-world addresses. It wasn't even encrypted." (Two weeks later, from an anonymous Web site, Viper mailed real.com details of its problem. He also told me that he had deleted the five-gigabyte database from his hard drive.)

Gerrie's biggest claim to hacker glory came last October, when he crashed into the global server for Nasdaq, which holds passwords to the main stock-exchange database. He told me that he was doing a security scan for a client when he stumbled upon a potentially devastating weakness in the computer code. Technicians said at the time that Gerrie must have


HOW I BECAME A FILE CLERK for the F.B.I.
LAST YEAR I WAS IN A RUT...
BUT THEN I SAW AN AD IN THE PAPER. "F.B.I. FILE CLERK – NO EXPERIENCE NEEDED"...
I APPLIED FOR THE JOB, AND WAS HONEST WITH THE INTERVIEWER...
I KNOW NOTHING OF ALPHABETIZATION! 26 LETTERS – IT MIGHT AS WELL BE 1,000 LETTERS, ROTATING SLOWLY IN THEIR OWN PRIVATE GALAXY!
NO PROBLEM!
WE WANT YOU TO APPROACH FILING CREATIVELY – TO BREAK NEW GROUND IN THE HANDLING OF FILES!
WITH THOSE WORDS, I WAS HIRED, AND I STARTED WORK THE NEXT DAY! SOON, I WAS TRANSFORMING FILES INTO ORIGAMI...
... AND I THEN PROGRESSED TO INSTALLATIONS, SUCH AS MY VERSION OF THE SPHINX, CREATED FROM OKLAHOMA-BOMBING FILES...
WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR? FILL OUT THE COUPON AND SEND IT IN – YOU'LL BE AMAZED HOW EASY IT IS!
☐ Yes, I'm interested in becoming an F.B.I. file clerk. Please rush me information.
☐ No, I'm not interested in becoming an F.B.I. file clerk. Please don't rush me information.
F.B.I. File Clerk Info
P.O. Box 38
Wallace, Va.
MICHAEL KUPPERMAN

slipped in through a hole known as the Source Fragment Disclosure Vulnerability. Gerrie told me that they were mistaken: “It was clean. No footprints.” Speaking like a chess player, he said, “I took the system in two moves.” Gerrie, who is not averse to publicity, informed officials of Nasdaq and made public the problems, which have since been patched. (Hackers, by the way, love patches, because they often fail. “It’s always the weakest spot,” Viper told me, “just like on a tire.”)

I had agreed to accompany the three to dinner, and then to go on to an Internet café where I could watch them “work.” They debated for a while, and eventually chose Burger King over McDonald’s. Earlier that day, Gerrie told me that he would bring Dimitri, because he was a “Microsoft hacker”; I had foolishly assumed that meant that Dimitri was somebody who hacked *for* Microsoft. “Why would I ever do anything for them?” he practically shrieked, while lingering over his second Whopper. “They will tell you that their software is safe to use, and they say that Linux”—a free open-source operating system that is an increasingly popular alternative to Windows—“is only for hobbyists. That’s the most dishonest and arrogant thing in the world. So I want to let people know something: if you use Microsoft products, I can take you down. And so can anyone with a brain.”

This refrain is as old as Microsoft itself, and I had heard it from people far more prominent than Dimitri. There is always a compromise between convenience and security, and, in trying to make products like Windows, Word, and Outlook attractive to as many people as possible, Microsoft, like most companies, has chosen convenience. But more features mean more lines of computer code, and thus more risk. (Windows 3.1, which was released in 1992, consisted of three million lines. Windows 2000 has about forty-two million lines. Security experts say that any program with one bug in ten thousand lines is unusually well written. If that is true, Windows 2000 would still have roughly forty-two hundred bugs.)

At dinner, the three told me how offended they were when they learned that the man who released the Kournikova virus was Dutch. They considered it clumsy, graceless, and rude. They were amazed when I admitted that I had wanted to meet him. It turns out that the young man, whose sign-on was ONTHEFLY but whose name is protected under Dutch privacy laws, was a "skriptkiddy," somebody who makes a virus by following a recipe from a kit. It is like making brownies from a mix, but requires even less skill.

Skriptkiddies are all over the Internet, and there is an astounding variety of tools like the one used to create the Kournikova virus; in my collection, for instance, I have the Mass Destruction Library, the China Town Macro Word Virus, the Spamicidal Trojan Batch Creator, and Nuke's Randomic Life Generator, among others. For one-stop shopping, nothing quite beats the Hack Attack Web site. There you can find nukers, sniffers, spoofers, flooders, and all sorts of mail bombs, viruses, and other programs that do nothing but harm. The VBS Worm Generator, which was used to make Kournikova—and was written by an Argentine who goes by the name of K—has been downloaded more than fifteen thousand times from just one popular site, VX Heavens, according to that site's administrator. Yet, only days after the outbreak, the mayor of Sneek, the small town where the Dutch hacker lives, said publicly that anyone smart enough to whip up pandemonium on that scale must be smart enough to deserve a job. "Can you believe that asshole?" Viper asked as we headed out the door of Burger King. "That's the level of talent we are dealing with here. A five-year-old can do what he did."

We wandered over to the Freeworld Internet Café, which bills itself as the oldest of the many Internet cafés in Amsterdam. A gust of marijuana smoke rolled past as we swung open the door. Inside, there was loud house-rock music and a few middle-aged hippies rolling joints (which are for sale in any Amsterdam coffee shop). The patrons were in the middle of an animated discussion about the distinctions between locally grown hydroponic weed and imports from Thailand. We rented time on three computers and sat in a semicircle, with me as a spectator in the middle. Gerrie refused to break the law, but the others had no such qualms. (With my permission, however, he did hack into my personal Web site—www.michaelspecter.com. That took him all of thirty seconds.)

As soon as they were seated, the three began to scour the Internet, probing for weaknesses. Effortlessly, they lifted passwords from local Internet-service providers, downloaded software that helped them scan portals into important Web sites, and began, almost randomly, to click their way from San Francisco to Seoul. Along the way, they stopped off at major corporations, universities, and official government Web sites.

After demonstrating how he could alter my Web pages and delete, rewrite, or edit what I had posted there, Gerrie (again at my request) starting sniffing out the *New Yorker* site. He used, among other tools, Netcraft, which is a Web site that helps companies make quick assessments of blatant vulnerabilities. Like all such software, it is intended for defensive purposes but can also be used to attack. (The best program, Nessus, can even be found on government Web sites. I got my copy from NASA. It's a defensive scanning program, but hackers use it every day.) "It would take about four minutes to bring this down," Gerrie told me, after a cursory examination of newyorker.com. "Maybe less." Gerrie doesn't normally use big scanner programs like Nessus. To him they are like training wheels—and are also easy to detect. He prefers to look at the code himself, line by line, doing what is called a hand scan. "Any systems person with a brain will see a big scanner coming," he said. "It's like turning on the radar. You can't miss it. If you want to leave no footprints, you have to be sneaky. A hand scan is still the best scan." He sat back and ordered a rum-and-tonic.

Dimitri suddenly yelped. "I have root on the L.A.P.D.!" he shouted, before remembering that he was in a public café and was breaking the law. He had gained access to the fundamental data used by the Los Angeles Police Department. (The Web sites of the New York and Los Angeles Police Departments are favorite targets of foreign hackers who watch a lot of American television.) A savvy organization will segregate its public Web site from any internal system that holds sensitive data. But here, too, one must trade safety for convenience. Online databases have changed the business world. Not only can customers follow their FedEx packages as they travel across the world; people have come to expect the route to be available at all times. That kind of access has also been of great aid to law-enforcement agencies. Yet, if a police officer can sit in his cruiser and examine a person's arrest history on a city or a federal database, it's a good bet that other people can do it, too.

Dimitri worked quickly, pilfering a unique address (each computer, when connected to the Internet, has one, like a license plate) and then arranging it so that anyone who traced him would think he was in France. This complicated maneuver is called "laundering the connection." Soon he had defiled the home page of the L.A.P.D. and posted the altered page in its place. That's a felony in America, but although the Netherlands has similar laws, nobody has ever been sent to jail there for hacking. After a few minutes, Dimitri restored the police page to its original condition.

Viper was busy at the next computer, crashing into one of the largest Internet-service providers in the Netherlands. "Yo!" Gerrie said loudly, with delight. "You got their jewels." I watched as hundreds of names scrolled by, along with credit-card information and data about spending behavior. How hard, I wondered, would it have been to get this information if the passwords had been protected? That produced a collective laugh. "I'll show you," Viper said, and after poking around Asia for a few minutes we ended up at the Web site of Kookmin University, in South Korea, a highly regarded institution with a solid technical reputation. "There are two thousand passwords in this file," he said, after a few more minutes of rooting around in the university directories. "And they are all encrypted."

Cheap and widely available encryption was supposed to guarantee privacy for normal users, and it certainly does help. Yet what is true in the physical world remains evident here, too: throw enough brute force at any lock and you will crack it. (In this case, the force would be a computer program that simply worked through millions of possible password combinations.) Viper got hold of two fairly simple decryption programs called LophtCrack and Nutcracker. LophtCrack was written by a crew of "white hat" hackers, with roots at M.I.T., who called themselves Lopht Heavy Industries. The Lopht people astonished Capitol Hill a couple of years ago by stating at a hearing that it would be dangerous to use the Internet for any vital service like air-traffic control. They also claimed that they could bring down the whole network in less than an hour. Nobody seemed to doubt them. In one well-publicized success, not long after that, Lopht identified a flaw in Windows that made it possible to decode an entire registry of user passwords in twenty-six hours. It was a task that Microsoft had claimed would take more than five thousand years of constant labor.

To decrypt Kookmin University's passwords, Viper used Nutcracker, and while he bounded across the Internet the program crunched away in the background. Fifteen minutes and six seconds later, the results were in: Nutcracker had opened thirty-nine of the roughly two thousand passwords on its first pass. It was embarrassing to look at them, because so many students, even at a university that focusses much attention on computers and technology, had obviously never given a thought to data security. The passwords were obvious: 1234, abcde, abc123, mom123. Many people say they don't really care about passwords, because, hey, who is going to steal my recipe for lemon-meringue pie? Fifteen years ago, when a desktop computer functioned mostly as a typewriter, that was a valid argument. The connected world has made such sentiments naïve, however; if just one employee at a large company dials into the network and uses a weak password (such as the word "password" itself, which is among the most common), any precaution taken by others will mean nothing.

My head was starting to spin, but Gerrie wasn't done with me yet. "You wanted to see how that Kournikova virus works," he said. "Why don't you sit here?" I moved over so I could type, and he took us to a collection of viruses, worms, and Trojan horses. Quickly, he downloaded the kit used by the student who made Kournikova and set it up on the machine. "What do you want to call it?" he asked. Before I could answer, he typed in newyorker.com. "Let's see how hard it is to flood the world with the newyorker.com virus," he said, smiling a bit more than I would have liked. I clicked on a file and a nice graphical form popped out. After that, I had only to follow the dots. When did I want to release the virus? was the first question. I typed a date. Next, it asked what I wanted on the subject line of the message that would be sent. I typed the words "Lance Armstrong." Then it asked whether I wanted to send the virus as an attachment to an E-mail message or as a Web page. Did I want to infect chat rooms? And what about encryption? (The Kournikova virus was encrypted, and this made it harder for standard antivirus software to sniff it out.) There was one final question on the form. Erase hard disk? I stared at Gerrie. "All you have to do is check it," he explained, "and it will erase the disk instead of copying the entries." I checked it. "Congratulations." Gerrie smiled. "You have just created a virus that will erase the hard drive of anyone dumb enough to open it. Maybe the mayor of Sneek will give you a job, too."

That evening in the Freeworld Café changed my view of the Internet. I still use it to buy merchandise (as I continue to hand my credit cards over to people I have never met), but the battle between hackers and everyone else has begun to seem like an arms race that the bad guys are destined to win. Nonetheless, there has been promising research, particularly in designing software that functions like the human immune system. The immune system recognizes things that don't belong in our bodies, and it does a remarkable job of repelling intruders. Several researchers, most notably Stephanie Forrest and Steven Hofmeyr, at the University of New Mexico, are developing highly sophisticated software to do just that for computer networks. They have had some impressive preliminary success, but even Hofmeyr says that such software will never completely deter committed criminals. (After all, viruses can overcome even the healthiest of immune systems.) Some security experts argue that too much reliance on technical solutions might even create a Maginot Line mentality, lulling people into the belief that their computers are safe.

"Computer security is a forty-year-old discipline," Bruce Schneier told me not long ago. Schneier created two of the most heavily used encryption algorithms, and his recent book on digital security, "Secrets & Lies," is perhaps the best popular exploration of the subject. "Every year, there is new research, new technology, and new products," he said. "Really good research, really good technology, and really good products. Yet every year the situation gets worse. Much worse. The Internet is just too complex to secure."

So Schneier decided to stop trying. Instead, he started Counterpane Internet Security, which relies on the skills of humans, flawed and inconsistent as they are, to manage the risks. Counterpane installs a special warning box—a Sentry—in every computer network it monitors. The sentries funnel information to a central knowledge base that keeps track of each client's idiosyncrasies. "We are like a fire brigade," Schneier told me. "Or an emergency room. In the real world, this kind of expertise is always farmed out."

When I described the ease with which my hacker companions in Amsterdam had rampaged through the Web—and my certainty that far worse went on each day—he laughed. "Does that surprise you?" he asked. "Yes, somebody can destroy the Internet in about half an hour. I know maybe a hundred people who could do it. But people can destroy the physical world, too. Can you walk into a hardware store and say, 'Please sell me a device that prevents murder'? Society has done pretty well in preventing murder, however, even though there is no absolute or technological solution for that, or for shoplifting or mugging.

"When you buy a safe, it comes with a rating," he went on. "It's a code: 30TL—thirty minutes, tools. 60TRTL—sixty minutes, torch and tools. What this means is that a professional safecracker, with safecracking tools and an oxyacetylene torch, will break open the safe in an hour. If an alarm doesn't sound and guards don't come running within that hour, the safe is worthless. The safe buys you time; but you have to spend it wisely." Schneier argues that the global reach of the Internet makes alarms and guards even more valuable in cyberspace than on terra firma. "One of the problems with the Internet is that we are living in a society of warlords. If laws matter in America, maybe they don't in Amsterdam or North Korea or Belgrade. We have been doing security for two thousand years, and the best stuff we have come up with is alarms and guards."

The first thing that struck me as I walked through the door of the company's Secure Operations Center, in Mountain View, California (there is an identical facility in northern Virginia), was the Buck Rogers decoder rings my escorts needed to get back into the secure part of the building. You must also pass through a biometric screen that examines the precise geometry of your hand. All Counterpane's critical systems are redundant; the company operates its own power generator, and the data it stores are mirrored at its center in northern Virginia. Counterpane technicians sit inside a featureless gray building that looks like a slightly more modern version of a Strategic Air Command control room. When something worrisome pops up, a machine sounds an ominous *bing*, after which it's not that hard to imagine the country moving rapidly to Defcon 3.

We spoke in a conference room, eating sandwiches, while I learned the rationale that a monitoring service uses to attract customers (many of whom pay twelve thousand dollars or more each month for this digital protection). "Most companies of any reasonable size will get some sort of serious intrusion about once a year," Elizabeth Zwicky, who is Counterpane's director of information technology, told me. "But it depends who they are: real estate in cyberspace has neighborhoods, and they vary just as they do everywhere else. There are places you could leave your keys in the car and places where you would want bars on the windows."

After a while, she stopped talking, stared at the darkened conference-room window, and said, "We are about to go transparent." Somebody flicked a light switch, and it was as if a television screen had been transformed into a giant picture window. The control room lay before us, along with three analysts, a set of computers, and several large screens filled with lights flashing to register potential problems faced by clients. A stream of incomprehensible data ran across one screen, and, although the comparison has been made before, it was hard to look at that flood of lights and not shout, as I did, "There really is a Matrix!"

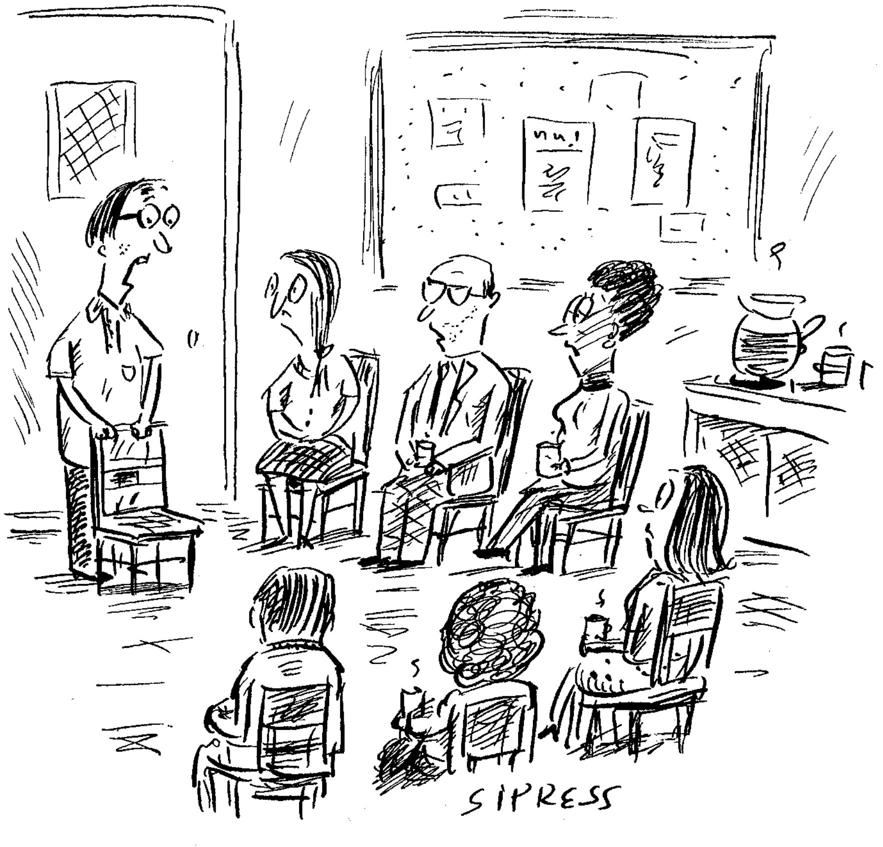
I had asked Schneier if there was a logic to the problems the company encountered. "God, no," he replied. "What we find just proves that the Net can never be secure." Not long ago, for instance, a company that Counterpane was monitoring suddenly appeared to have an enormous new computer network. It turned out that one of the employees was working from home. The man's wife worked for another major corporation, and they had set up a home network to link the family computers. "When this guy dialled into the office, he was linked to his wife, and she was linked to her company," Schneier said. "So they were all linked together. We fixed it, but it's a reminder. There is just too much out there—you can't protect it all."

I never did meet the man who released the Kournikova virus (and whose notoriety was unearned). But I did write to K, who also goes by the name Kalamar, and lives in Argentina, where he maintains a Web site devoted to viruses, worms, and other malicious code. Police say he is the man who created the kit that was used to make the Kournikova virus (and others).

"I'm not talking anymore," K wrote in response to my first E-mail. "Too much trouble." I sent him another, asking why he thought it was acceptable to write viruses. Most people, when asked that question, say it's for research, which is never true. Or they say that they didn't mean it or that the whole thing went too far. Not K.

"I have had some problems and I don't want to make this bigger, so I'll just stay out of the scene for a while," he wrote back. "But if you are so concerned about the safety of the Internet, why don't you talk to the people who make it dangerous? And that's not me. I don't write software, I am just showing you how bad it all is. People think this stuff is all free and easy. It's not free at all. Eventually people will realize that."

I don't play with my worms or viruses anymore—nor do I recommend it. When I was in Amsterdam, I asked Gerrie to send me a copy of the virus that we had created at the café, the one that destroys your hard drive if you open it. I wanted to be sure that it was real, and when I saw it, alive, on my laptop I deleted it and promptly forgot about it. I use the portable only when I'm travelling, though, and as soon as I got home I absent-mindedly began to make my way through the E-mail that had gathered on my main computer. Before I knew it, I had clicked on an extra copy of the newyorker.com virus, which did its job as advertised. If you have never tried this, don't. It's amazing how rapidly everything you've saved can disappear from your hard drive forever. ♦



"Hi. My name is Barry, and I check my E-mail two to three hundred times a day."

LETTER FROM CHINA

BOOMTOWN GIRL

Finding a new life in the golden city.

BY PETER HESSLER

Ma Li couldn't tell me exactly why she had left her home town after graduating from the local teachers college. "There was something in the heart," she said. "My mother says that I just won't be satisfied with a happy life. She says that I'm determined to *chiku*—eat bitter." In any event, she wouldn't have been satisfied with life as a local schoolteacher. "Teaching is a good job for a woman, and it's easy to find a husband, because men like to have teachers as their wives," she said. "It could have been a very comfortable life. But, if it's too comfortable, I think it's like death."

She was slipping away even when I first met her. That was in 1996, when I taught English at the teachers college in Fuling, a small town on the Yangtze River in Sichuan Province. My students were training to become middle-school teachers, and one day I asked them to respond to a hypothetical question: Would you rather have a long life with the normal ups and downs, or an extremely happy life that ends after another twenty years?

Nearly all my students took the first option. Most of them came from peasant homes in the Sichuan countryside, and several pointed out that their families were so poor that they couldn't afford to die in two decades. Ma Li, though, chose the short life. At nineteen, she was the youngest student in the class. She wrote:

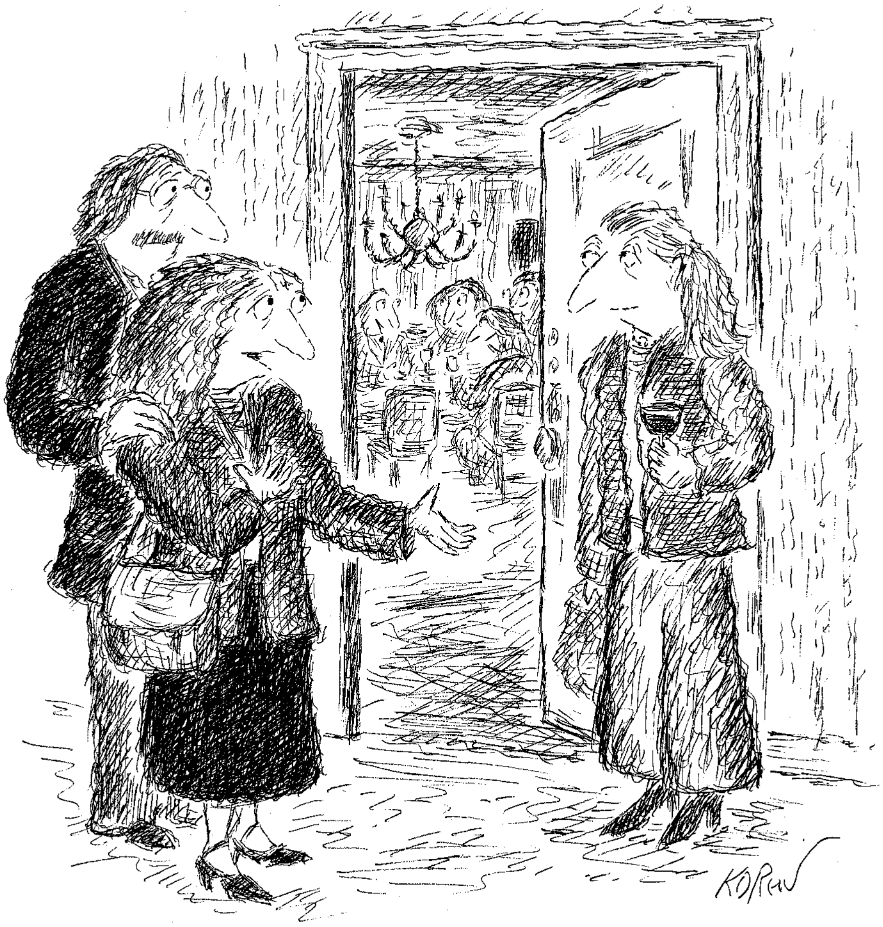
> It seems to me that I haven't been really happy for quite a long time. Sometimes I owe my being dispirited to the surroundings, especially the oppressive atmosphere in our college. But I find the other students can enjoy themselves while I am complaining, so I think the problem is in myself.

Everything she wrote that year marked her as different. She contradicted her classmates; she skirted the Communist Party line; she had her own opinions. She wrote about her father, a math professor who had spent the Cultural Revolution in political exile, working in a coal mine; and she wrote about her older sister, who had gone to the city of Shenzhen, seven hundred miles away, to look for work. When I asked my students to compose a business letter to an American organization, Ma Li chose the Country Music Association, in Nashville. She told me that she was curious to learn what country music was like. Another time, she asked if I had any black friends, because she had never seen a black person, except on television. When my literature class performed "A Midsummer Night's Dream," she played Titania. She was a good actress, although she had a tendency to play every role with a touch of a smile, as if she were watching herself from a great distance. She had high cheekbones, full lips, and dark, fast-moving eyes in a wide-open face.

After graduation, most of my students accepted government-assigned teaching jobs in their home towns. Ma Li went south to Kunming, the capital of Yunnan Province, with her boyfriend to look for work. He was a square-faced young man with bristly hair, hard black eyes, and a quick temper, and he wanted to go on to Shanghai. "I hadn't decided to break up with him yet," Ma Li told me later. "But I knew I didn't want to go to Shanghai." Instead, in November of 1997, she went to Shenzhen, and within a few months they had broken up for good. In Shenzhen, it took her less than a week to find a position as a secretary in a factory that produced costume jewelry for export. Her starting salary was eight hundred and seventy

ILLUSTRATION BY LORENZO MATTOTTI

"Some people say there is no real love in Shenzhen," Ma Li said. "People are too busy with earning money to really live."



"Please forgive us for being so late—we had parking issues."

• •

yuan a month, or a hundred and five American dollars. Most of her former classmates were earning about forty dollars a month as teachers in Sichuan.

It was not unusual for former students to call and tell me about various milestones of independence. Often, these had to do with money and new possessions—a salary raise, a new apartment. Once, a student called to tell me that he had acquired a cell phone. He talked about the cell phone for a few minutes, and then he mentioned, in an offhand way, that he had also become engaged. Five months after starting the factory job, Ma Li called to report that she had received a raise, to a hundred and twenty dollars a month.

She laughed when I said that she now made as much money as I did. But she sounded a little funny, and I asked if something was wrong.

"The company has an agent in Hong Kong," she said slowly. "He often comes here to Shenzhen. He is an old man, and he likes me."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Because I am fat." She giggled nervously. I knew that she had gained a little weight, and in some ways it made her even prettier.

"Does he want you to be his girlfriend?"

"Perhaps." Her voice sounded small on the phone.

"Is he married?"

"He is divorced. He has young children in Taiwan. But he usually works in Hong Kong."

"How often does he come to Shenzhen?"

"Twice a month."

"Is it a big problem?"

"He always finds a way to be with me," she said. "He says he will help me find a job in Hong Kong if I want one. The salaries are much higher there, you know."

"That sounds like a very bad idea," I said carefully. "If you want another job, you should not ask him for help. That will only cause big problems in the future. You should try to avoid him."

"I do," she said. "And I tell my coworkers to always be with me if he is here."

"Well, if it becomes a big problem, you should leave the job."

"I know," she said. "Anyway, it is not such a good job, and if I have to leave I will."

The city of Shenzhen is surrounded by a sixty-seven-mile-long chain-link fence. Some of the fence's sections are topped with barbed wire. Deep in the center of downtown is a seventy-acre expanse of green called Litchi Park. At its southern end is a billboard that features an enormous image of Deng Xiaoping against a backdrop of the Shenzhen skyline, with the injunction "Persist in Following the Communist Party's Basic Line for One Hundred Years Without Change." The billboard has become a symbol of Shenzhen, and locals and visitors often pose in front of it for photographs. In February of 1997, when Deng Xiaoping died, thousands of Shenzhen residents gathered to make offerings at the billboard. They left flowers, poetry, and other memorials, and some of them sang "Spring Story," which is the official Shenzhen song:

> In the spring of 1979
> An old man drew a circle on the southern
> coast of China
> And city after city rose up like fairy tales
> And mountains and mountains of gold
> gathered like a miracle.

Other Chinese cities have history, but Shenzhen's origins have the flavor of myth—the miraculous birth, the benevolent god. In 1978, two years after the death of Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping marked his rise to power by initiating what became known as Reform and Opening—capitalist-style innovations that ended almost three decades of Communist economics. Deng avoided trying out the more radical changes in major cities like Beijing and Shanghai, where mistakes would be politically disastrous. Instead, he and his advisers experimented in less developed areas, in what came to be called Special Economic Zones. Through a system of tax breaks and investment privileges, the government hoped to encourage foreign firms to set up shop in these zones. In 1980, they conferred this honor on Shenzhen, a sleepy southern border town whose economy had depended mostly on fishing and farming. Shenzhen became a "reform laboratory," and one of its nicknames was Window to the Outside World.

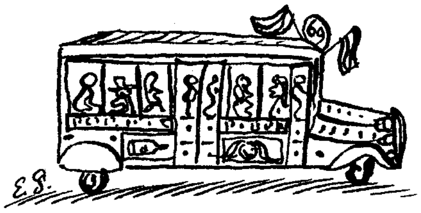
In 1990, the government established the Shenzhen Stock Exchange—the first big-board market in China. (The second one opened later that year, in Shanghai.) Since 1980, Shenzhen's G.D.P. has had an annual growth rate of more than thirty per cent, and its residents enjoy one of the highest standards of living in any Chinese city. A number of major American corporations have plants in Shenzhen, including I.B.M., Compaq, PepsiCo, and DuPont.

Residents of Hong Kong, which is separated from Shenzhen by only a waterway and a fence, tend to dismiss their neighbor as a cheap imitation of the former British colony. Indeed, Shenzhen's skyscrapers aren't nearly as impressive as Hong Kong's, the streets aren't as clean, and there isn't the same dramatic cityscape of steel and lights shimmering across a harbor. But few mainlanders have been to Hong Kong, and to them Shenzhen is astonishing. The city is probably the cleanest of any in mainland China. And it is green—official statistics boast that forty-four per cent of the city is open space. Parks are sprinkled throughout the downtown area, and the streets are lined with banyan trees and palms and carefully groomed strips of grass. There are few bicycles downtown; most people can afford to take buses or cabs. The traffic moves smoothly. The city center is intersected by Shennan Road, nine lanes of traffic bordered by the city's best-known buildings: the Stock Exchange, a block of glistening blue-green glass; the Land King Tower, a narrow, twin-spired building of sixty-nine stories; and its adjoining apartment complex, which, with a seven-story-high opening in its façade, is the city's most architecturally innovative structure.

Over the past twenty years, Shenzhen has become home to a social experiment that is as impressive as its economic adventure. Its population has exploded from three hundred thousand to more than four million. The average Shenzhen resident is less than twenty-nine years old—a remarkable statistic in a country whose birth policy has resulted in aging urban populations. Because many of the factories rely on unskilled, low-wage labor, most of the newcomers are women. Although there are no reliable official statistics, locals like to say that there are seven women to every man in Shenzhen, and the city is sometimes described as a "woman's paradise," because it offers so many job opportunites to young women. But this phrase hardly describes the underside of the boomtown. Shenzhen is notorious as a place where workers in poorly regulated factories often lose limbs in labor-related accidents. China's development over the past decade has spurred an explosive growth in the sex industry, and nowhere is this phenomenon more obvious than in downtown Shenzhen, where it's impossible to walk at night without being propositioned by young prostitutes, who are known as "street angels."

Shenzhen feels like a city under siege. Locals, knowing that they have been the beneficiary of unusual government patronage, are constantly worried that Shenzhen's special status might be revoked. (The 1997 offerings to Deng Xiaoping at the billboard in Litchi Park reflected this fear of political change.) In the mid-nineteen-eighties, when a series of smuggling scandals broke out in the Special Economic Zones, conservative Communist officials complained that the loosened restrictions on foreign investment were invitations to corruption and neo-colonialism.

Similar worries prompted the government to erect the encircling fence. It was a distinctly Chinese "solution": just as the Great Wall had been built to keep foreigners at bay, so the fence was intended to keep the capitalist reforms under control. Chinese citizens entering Shenzhen proper have to go through customs, where they must show a border pass and an I.D. that requires approval from their home province. The completion of the fence, in 1984, had unintended consequences. Labor-intensive factories inside the Special Economic Zone began moving to the other side of the fence to take advantage of cheaper rents and less rigorous law enforcement. Today, Shenzhen is divided into two worlds, which are described by residents as *guannei* and *guanwai*—"within the customs" and "outside the customs." Satellite towns have sprung up beyond the fence, most of them squalid and unplanned. In this sprawl of cheaply constructed factories and worker dormitories, wages are lower, workweeks are longer, and labor accidents and factory fires are more frequent than they are in Shenzhen proper.



It was here, outside the customs, that Ma Li got her job at the costume-jewelry factory, handling inventory, keeping track of orders, and doing some English translation. The factory made pewter, brass, and low-grade silver jewelry, as well as cheap plastic beads that were painted and lacquered and packaged in zip-lock bags to be sent to Hong Kong, Southeast Asia, San Francisco, and Chicago.

Her stories drifted up to me from the south. Every two or three weeks, Ma Li telephoned or wrote, creating the city in my mind. Some of her tales ended abruptly, like the one about the businessman from Hong Kong who had pursued her. Other stories lasted longer, like the one about her older sister, who had first worked as a travelling saleswoman and then been recruited by a company that was running a pyramid scheme. She brought Ma Li to the recruitment meeting. "A lot of the salespeople had low cultural levels, but they had learned how to talk," Ma Li recalled. "I didn't think it was a good way to make money, but it was a good way to improve yourself and improve your confidence." Her sister had known that it was a scam—the government was cracking down on pyramid schemes, which had run rampant across southern China—and she said that she had gone to the meeting simply out of curiosity. Afterward, she had taken a job with a lonely-hearts hot line, talking on the telephone with other people who felt lost in Shenzhen. "Some people say there is no real love in Shenzhen," Ma Li said when I asked why people called her sister's hot line. “People are too busy with earning money to really live.”

That, probably, was why a young man named Gao Ming took her by surprise. He had been trained as a moldmaker, but he came to the jewelry factory as a purchasing agent, because he wanted a break from manual labor. At his previous job in Shenzhen, Gao Ming had miscalculated the weight of a metal part, which slipped when he and two other workers were trying to lift it. Gao Ming let go. The other two workers didn’t, and they lost their fingers. The workers were promised compensation, and Gao Ming wasn’t blamed for the accident. Still, he decided to leave the job. Seeing the injured men around the factory made him uncomfortable.

At first, Ma Li didn’t take much notice when Gao Ming arrived at her factory, in March of 1998. He was of average height, with stiff black hair, and his shoulders were broad from working with the molds. He wasn’t particularly handsome. He kept to himself. But after a while, she found that she was noticing him. She liked the way he walked—there was a certain confidence in his gait. Two months later, small gifts started appearing in the drawer of her desk. She received two dolls and a small figurine of a sheep. She didn’t ask who had put them there.

One day in September, Gao Ming and Ma Li went out with some of their co-workers and found themselves walking alone in the local park. Ma Li can’t remember how they became separated from the others. Suddenly she was frightened—things were happening too fast. She was twenty-two years old. He was twenty-six.

“I don’t want to walk with you,” she said.

“Who do you want to walk with?” Gao Ming asked.

“I don’t want to walk with anybody!”

They went back to the factory. Months later, Gao Ming told her that it was then that he could see she hadn’t made up her mind to reject him.

The jewelry factory had fifty employees. The owner was Taiwanese, as were many of the bosses who ran plants outside the customs. He told the workers that he hated mainland China and that he was there only because of the cheap labor. The workers didn’t like the Taiwanese owner very much. Some of them made as little as twelve cents an hour, which meant that they had to work overtime to earn a decent income. Whenever they talked about the boss, they used the words that many workers in Shenzhen use to describe the Taiwanese owners: “stingy” and “lecherous.” But the jewelry-factory boss wasn’t as bad as many of the other bosses, and conditions at the plant were better than at many of the others beyond the fence. The workers had Sundays off, and during the week they were allowed to leave the factory after work hours, although everybody had to be back in the dormitory by 11 or 12 P.M., depending on the boss’s whim.

The dormitory where Ma Li lived was on the top two floors of a six-story building. There were six workers to a dorm room. It was a “three-in-one” factory—production, warehousing, and living quarters were combined into one structure. This arrangement is illegal in China, and the workers knew it, just as they knew that some of the production material stored on the first floor was extremely flammable. What’s more, an electrician had reported to Ma Li that the building’s wiring was faulty. Afterward, she mapped out an escape route for herself. If a fire broke out at night, she would run to the dormitory’s sixth-floor balcony and jump across to the roof of the building next door. That was the extent of her plan—she had no interest in complaining to the government about the violations, and neither did the other workers. All of them were far from home, and they knew that such conditions were common in the plants outside the customs.

One Saturday night in October, Gao Ming took Ma Li’s hand as they were crossing the road. Gao Ming held on tightly.

“I’m too nervous,” Ma Li said, once they had reached the other side. “I don’t want it to be like this.”

“What’s wrong?” Gao Ming said. “Haven’t you ever done this before?”

TO A FRIEND

What a young girl you must have been,
so pretty, so unyielding, starving
for attention yet running
from whatever came your way.

Hungry even in denial
you have come to love
the preparation of food,
the rituals of evening, the good table.

But you are sugar to the black ant
of loss, the fly
of human vicissitude.
Is suffering sustenance to anyone?

Well, you’ve built a villa
at night with the lumber of darkness,
clothed in the restraint of autumnal color.
We talk of the meal last consumed.

We talk about what won’t be disclosed.
I do not share the passion you call
your secret. It is enough that you love
the world, that you load it with image,

your beautifully hazardous themes of the spirit.

—*Daniel Halpern*

"I have," she said. "But I'm still scared."

"It's going to be like this in the future," Gao Ming said. "You should get used to it."

I made my first visit to Shenzhen in April, 1999. It was a hazy morning, the sky low and heavy with smog, when my bus arrived at Ma Li's satellite city, twenty miles outside the Shenzhen fence. She was waiting for me in front of a local hamburger joint—the sole American-style fast-food restaurant in town and a sign that Western influence had made its way out here from downtown Shenzhen.

Ma Li looked much the same as when I had last seen her. She wore a simple blue dress, and her hair was tied back; she smiled and shook my hand. Much of her old shyness had disappeared; she was the guide now, steering me briskly through town to another bus stop, where we caught a ride into the Special Economic Zone. Uniformed guards at the border checked our I.D.s—my passport, her border pass—and the highway led us into the heart of the city. She was excited: she said that she went inside the fence only once a month or so, because the city was so expensive and because her factory restricted the workers to one-day weekends.

I visited Shenzhen three more times, and it was always the passage into town and then the return, the fenced-in boundary and the routine of the checkpoint, that were the most memorable moments of the day. On that first trip, Ma Li and I spent only a few hours downtown. We walked past the Stock Exchange and glanced at the digital board on its façade. We went to the Safari Park Shenzhen, where tourists paid twenty-five yuan to throw live ducks to the crocodiles. I took Ma Li's photo in front of the Deng Xiaoping billboard. In the Chinese way, she didn't smile—a sombre pose with the Old Man waving in the background.

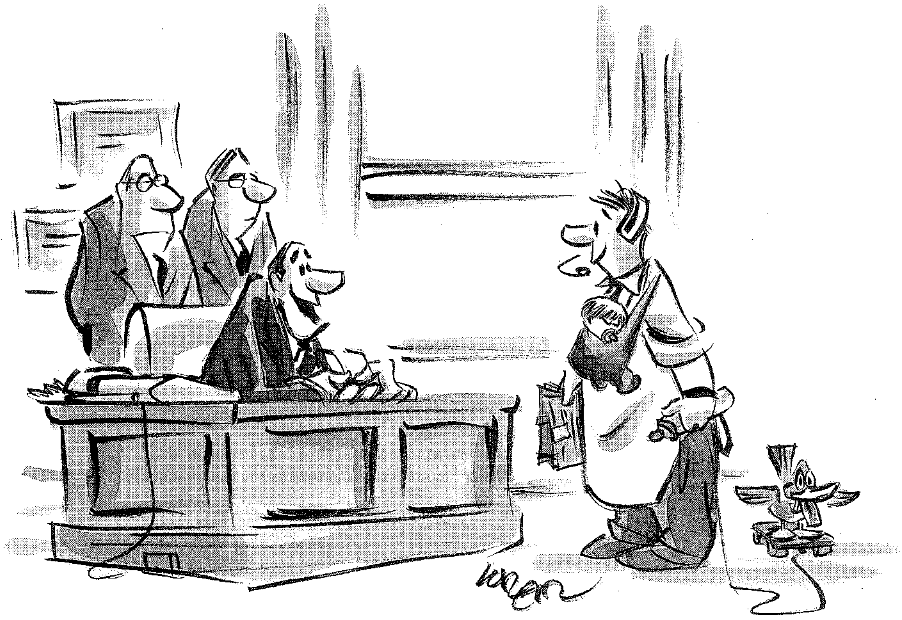
And then we returned, catching another bus north: past the downtown skyscrapers and the apartment blocks, watching the neighborhoods grow seedier with every mile we travelled from the center. We cut through the green hills just before the border, where nothing had yet been built. And then we arrived at the long, low line of the chain-link fence. There was a billboard at the checkpoint advertising "Mission Hills Golf Club: The First 72-Hole Golf Club in China."

Beyond the fence was a rough cluster of unfinished concrete buildings. Piles of dirt stood beside enormous foundation holes. We kept going north, the factory towns coming one after the other: dormitories surrounded by fences, smokestacks sprouting in dirty clumps. Signs above factory gateways identified the goods produced within: shoes, furniture, toys. We travelled twenty miles before arriving in Ma Li's town, where a group of Taiwanese bosses had set up half a dozen jewelry plants in a tight group. A space of a few feet separated Ma Li's factory and the neighboring one.

That night, we had dinner at an outdoor restaurant on the town's main street. It was a pleasant evening; I had always preferred nighttime in China, and, in the Shenzhen satellite towns, the monotony of the urban landscapes was hidden by the darkness. There was an energy to the place at night: the streets were filled with young people, walking in packs, laughing and flirting with one another. It was clear that they had nothing else to do—there were no families here, no traditions. They were free.

Ma Li sent part of her salary home to help pay her brother's school tuition, and the responsibility had given her a new air of maturity. At twenty-three, she was the oldest worker in her factory office, which was staffed entirely by women. During dinner, she regaled me with stories about the Taiwanese factory owners. They fascinated her—she couldn't believe the looseness of their lives, financially and morally, and she saw them as symbolic of the world beyond the mainland. She told me about one of her boss's colleagues, a Chinese-American who had recently arrived from San Francisco on business, had faxed his wife a love letter from Ma Li's office, and then had gone out and hired a prostitute. Ma Li's boss was always leering at the young women in the factory; a Taiwanese businessman in a nearby factory had become so distracted by two Sichuanese mistresses that his plant went bankrupt. In Ma Li's opinion, they were all the same. "All of them have failed somewhere else," she scoffed, explaining that her boss's old company in Taiwan had gone bankrupt years ago. When I asked if Shenzhen had fewer political restrictions than Fuling, she said it did, but pointed out that the labor practices were just as restrictive. "Here it's not the government but the bosses who control everything," she said. "Maybe it amounts to the same thing."

She told me about a notorious Taiwanese-owned purse factory in a nearby city. The plant kept the gates



"First of all, Harrington, let me tell you how much we all admire your determination not to choose between job and family."

locked throughout the six-day workweek. Except on Sundays, the workers couldn't leave the factory complex.

"That can't be legal," I said.

"Many of the factories do that," she said, shrugging. "All of them have good connections with the government."

She explained that one of her friends had worked at the purse factory, where the Taiwanese boss often ordered everyone to work until midnight, yelling when they got tired. One worker had complained and been fired; when he tried to claim his last paycheck, the boss had him beaten up. Ma Li decided that she had to do something about it, so she wrote the boss a letter that said, "This day next year will be your memorial day."

"And I drew a picture of a—" She was speaking English, and she couldn't think of the word. She pushed aside her plate and sketched an outline on the table—a simple head, a narrow body.

"A skeleton?" I asked.

"Yes," she said. "A skeleton. But I didn't write my name. I wrote, 'An unhappy worker.' "

I didn't know how to respond—back in Fuling, my writing class hadn't covered death threats. Finally, I said, "Did the letter work?"

"I think it helped," she said. "Workers at the factory said that the boss was very worried about it. Afterward, he was a little better."

"Why didn't you complain to the police?"

"It doesn't do any good," she said. "All of them have connections. In Shenzhen, you have to take care of everything yourself."

When we finished the meal, Ma Li looked at me and said, "Do you want to see something interesting?"

She led me to a small street near the middle of town. Below the road, a creek flowed sluggishly in the shadows. Dozens of people stood along the curb, smoking cigarettes. The street was unlit, and all of the people were men. I asked what was going on.

"They're looking for prostitutes," Ma Li said. We watched as a prostitute appeared—walking slowly, glancing around, until a man came up and spoke to her. They talked for a few seconds, and then the man slipped back into the shadows. The woman kept walking. Ma Li said, "Do you want to see what happens if I leave you here alone?"

"No," I said. "We can leave now."

I spent the night in Gao Ming's one-room apartment. He had recently left Ma Li's factory to start a new job, which allowed him to live in private housing. His neighborhood was covered with bold-faced flyers advertising private venereal-disease clinics; we followed the notices up the stairwell to Gao Ming's apartment, on the fourth floor. The building was only half constructed—the walls unpainted, the plaster chipping away, the plumbing unfinished. The water heater hadn't been installed yet. Much of the development beyond the Shenzhen fence seemed to be like this—abandoned before it was completed. There were too many factories and apartment blocks to build, and the contractors moved on once the bare essentials were in place. It occurred to me that as soon as anything in this region was actually finished it was immediately exported.

Gao Ming's apartment was furnished with two simple wooden beds covered with rattan mats. There was nothing on the walls. Apart from a thermos and a few books, he didn't have many possessions. His current job involved making molds for the production of household appliances.

I knew that something about Gao Ming made Ma Li feel secure. Once, she had bluntly told me that he wasn't handsome, and this was true—acne had badly scarred his face. But his plainness was attractive to her. She had a theory that handsome men weren't reliable.

Over the next year, Ma Li's letters and phone calls became less cheerful. She complained of headaches; the job had become more tedious; the boss was insufferable. Her sister had moved away, after marrying a man from Fujian Province. Ma Li's co-workers came and went; she was still the oldest woman in her office. By now, she had adopted a protective role, guarding new women employees against the boss's advances. For Christmas, she sent me samples from her factory: bracelets made of pink and purple plastic beads. She told me that I could give them to my sisters in America.

I sent her a story that I had written about her and her classmates, and she responded, "I'm not confident that I'm

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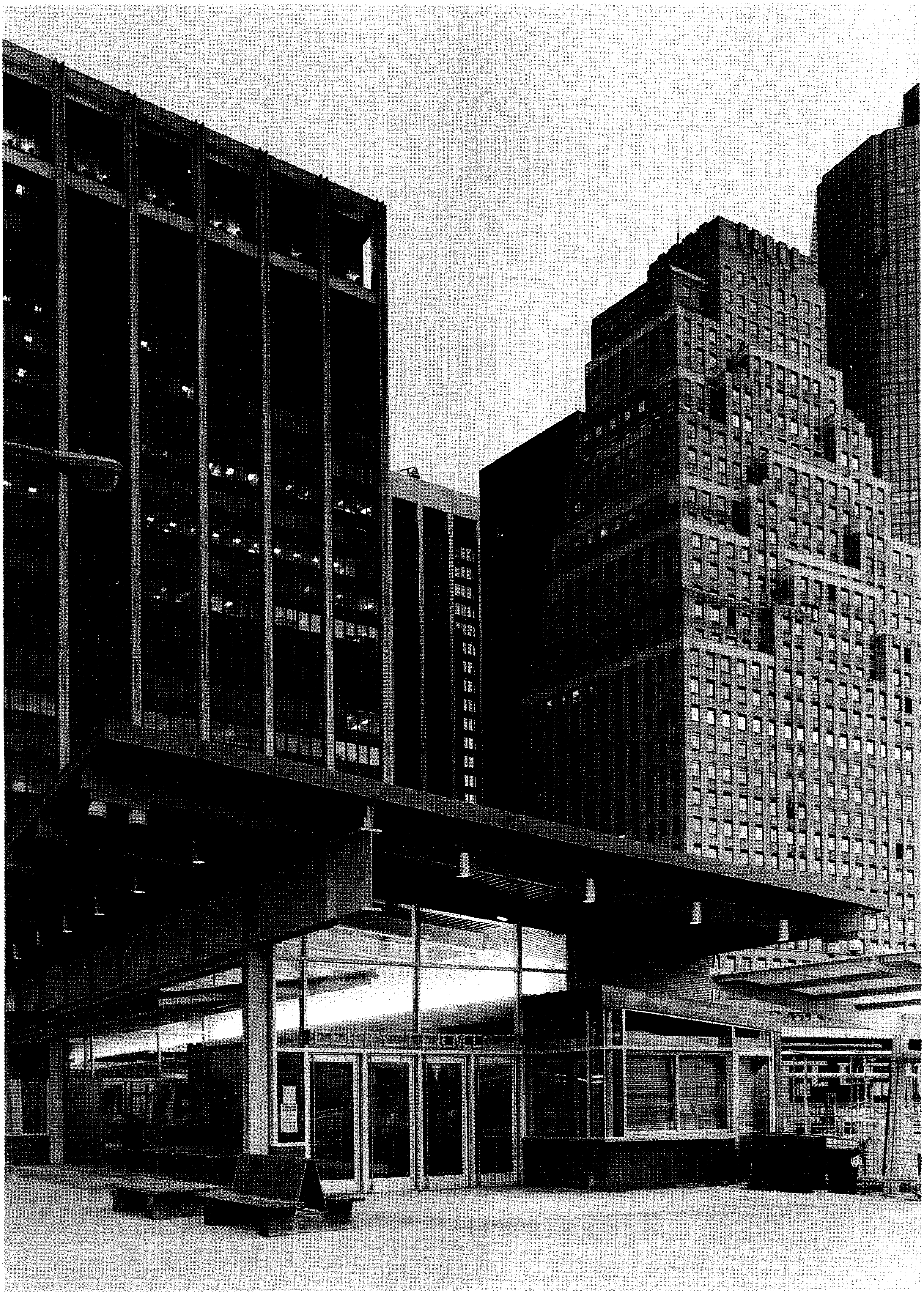
SHOWCASE BY ROBERT POLIDORI

GATEWAY TO GOTHAM

Architects often have more ideas than it is possible to fit into one building, but sometimes they get away with including them all. This is the case at the new ferry terminal at Pier 11 in the East River, where Henry Smith-Miller and Laurie Hawkinson designed a tiny pavilion that manages to allude to a barge on the Grand Canal in Venice, an aircraft carrier, high-tech industrial structures, New York's old waterfront architecture, and a garage. The building doesn't literally resemble any of these things, although its metal-and-glass façade, which tilts upward to open the entire space to the outdoors, does make the place seem a bit like a dream haven for a pair of silver Porsches. Smith-Miller and Hawkinson, who last week were awarded the Brunner Prize by the American Academy of Arts and Letters, have modernist inclinations, and to turn a derelict pier at the foot of Wall Street into a hospitable entrance to the city they produced a nimble, tensile structure that holds up beside the skyscrapers of lower Manhattan. If Frank Gehry's new downtown Guggenheim Museum is built, the terminal will have to stand up to that, too, since the ferry building would be nestled almost beneath the museum behemoth. But Smith-Miller and Hawkinson's pavilion is tough, and it will do just fine whatever happens in lower Manhattan. It is one of the most refreshing public buildings to have gone up on the waterfront in years. The new ferry terminal celebrates the routine passages of everyday life while hinting at the excitement of travel across water, and it reminds us that eager young architects with ideas don't often enough get the chance to express themselves in the public realm in this city.

—*Paul Goldberger*



as admirable as I seem to you. It's true that I like to be alone. But partly it's because I don't know how to join the people; I can't share their joys and sorrows and cares. Although I really wish to." Another time she wrote about her job, "My head aches sometimes. And mistakes often happen. . . . Do you know of any kind of jobs that are interesting and benefit the whole society?"

I encouraged her to find something that required English skills, but I knew that my advice wouldn't help much, because there was something elusive about her unhappiness. I had glimpsed a similar quality in some of my brightest students—most of them girls. The best freshman student in the English department had been a quiet girl who kept apart from her peers. After class, she often came to see the foreign teachers for extra practice with her English, which was excellent. During summer vacation, she returned to her home town and killed herself by jumping off a bridge. I never learned anything else about her death; nobody in the class had been close to her. In China, more women kill themselves than men, and the suicide rate for females is nearly five times the world average—the highest of any country in the world. Many of them are women from remote provinces who migrate to places like Shenzhen.

One of Shenzhen's economic innovations has been the establishment of "talent markets," or employment centers, which have replaced the Communist-style system in which jobs were assigned by the government. Although these markets encourage independence, they also subscribe to traditional notions of how a woman should look. Ma Li complained that prospective employers often thought that she was too short. (She stands 1.53 metres tall—just over five feet—and in China talent markets generally advertise jobs that require women to be at least 1.6 metres tall, especially if they want to be employed as receptionists, secretaries, or waitresses at expensive restaurants.) Ma Li also said that she had been cursed with eyes that were too small and lips that were too big, and this reduced her chances of getting jobs that required female applicants to be blessed with *wuguan duanzheng*, meaning that "the five senses"—the ears, the eyes, the lips, the nose, and the tongue—are regular. In the first letter she wrote to me after starting work at the jewelry factory, she introduced her co-workers by carefully describing their appearance:

> Lijia is the most beautiful, able and shortest girl, who is liked by everyone. Huahui is a classical beauty, most private telephone calls from boys are for her. But I don't like her very much, for her word sometimes hurtful. Lily is the other secretary, who came two days earlier than me. She leaves us an impression of stupid and irresponsible. So she is not very popular in the office. Xinghao is the fattest girl concerning much about losing weight.

Although conventional notions of beauty can make things uncomfortable for women in the Shenzhen job market, they can enjoy freedom in the city which most women in other parts of the mainland cannot. In Shenzhen, it is not uncommon for young people to live together before marriage. Divorce is more acceptable, and many women are in no hurry to get married. During my wanderings around the city, I picked up two copies of a women's magazine entitled *Window to the Special Economic Zone*. Its articles carried such headlines as "ONE NIGHT'S LOVE," "I AM NOT A LADY," "A TRAP SET BY AN OLD MAN," and "WHY HAVE AN ABORTION?"

Whenever Ma Li talked about difficult personal issues, she mentioned a radio call-in show, "At Night You're Not Lonely," and its host, Wu Xiaomei, who is an idol to the young women of Shenzhen. In 1992, when she was twenty, Wu Xiaomei had left her home, in a remote coal-mining region of the Chinese interior, for a seventy-dollar-a-month job in a Shenzhen mineral-water plant. One night, she telephoned a call-in show. Unlike most callers, she didn't want advice—she just wanted to tell listeners about her long-held dream of becoming a radio-show host. Wu Xiaomei was a good talker, and after she was finished she gave the listeners her work address and phone number.

"The next week, I got stacks of letters and more than a hundred phone calls," Wu Xiaomei told me when I interviewed her during one of my trips to Shenzhen. "But the mineral-water plant fired me for using their phone for personal reasons, so I had no job. I took all the letters, bundled them together, and brought them to the radio station."

Wu Xiaomei paused and took a long drag on her Capri menthol superslim. We were sitting in a private room in a downtown Shenzhen restaurant. A pretty, petite woman with long black hair, she is the type of Chinese smoker who can eat and smoke simultaneously. She exhaled a thin menthol stream and continued: "They said I was too young—I was only twenty years old and I had no experience. But one official decided to give me a chance. I told him that I was only twenty and that I didn't understand many things, but that many listeners were the same as me, so maybe I'd understand them."

Nine years later, a million people tune in to Wu Xiaomei's show every weeknight, and many of them are young factory women who work outside the fence. Even though the Shenzhen radio station is government-owned, like all media in China, Wu Xiaomei often gives blunt advice that rankles tradition-minded officials—for example, recommending that young people not be afraid of living together before marriage. She has written a book; she often appears on television; and she exudes an air of sophistication. When I asked her which writers she admired, she mentioned the stories of Raymond Carver. ("You can tell so much from a very small detail," she said.) Like many women I met in Shenzhen within the fence, she is worldly, self-made, and confident. She had once broken off a long-term romantic relationship partly because, she said, "he didn't like it that people knew him as Wu Xiaomei's boyfriend."

All the women at Ma Li's factory listened to Wu Xiaomei's show religiously, and the next day they discussed the callers whom they had heard the night before: the wives who were having affairs, the mistresses who wanted a way out, the women who couldn't decide whether or not to move in with their boyfriends. Ma Li was most impressed by the individuality of Wu Xiaomei's responses. "She doesn't make blanket judgments," she said. "She looks at each caller's specific situation and then decides."

But even with the help of Wu Xiaomei, Ma Li didn't find it easy to adapt to Shenzhen's freedom. She said that she thought it was acceptable for young people to live together before marriage but not to tell anybody about it. Wu Xiaomei had once told a caller the same thing, and Ma Li agreed that this decision should remain completely unspoken. "It could influence the way people see you, especially if you break up later," she said. "It's better if you just don't say anything about it." One day, when she remarked that sex was more open in Shenzhen than in other parts of China, I asked her whether this was good or bad. She thought for a moment and then said, "It's better than it was in the past. But it shouldn't cross a certain line." When I pushed her to explain what that line should be, she said, "Traditional morality," but she couldn't define what that meant.

"I'm folding my AAA map and I'm shutting my mouth!"

One day, I gave Ma Li a copy of a popular Shenzhen novel, "You Can't Control My Life." The book, which was published in 1998, follows the fortunes of its migrant heroine in Shenzhen from her first job, as a secretary, to a life of luxury as the mistress of a wealthy Hong Kong businessman. The author, a twenty-nine-year-old woman named Miao Yong, grew up in western China and migrated to Shenzhen after graduating from a teachers college. She found a job as a secretary, wrote fiction on the side, and became rich when "You Can't Control My Life," her first novel, became a best-seller. The government banned the book, because of its portrayal of drugs, gambling, and casual sex. Like many book bannings in China, this actually boosted sales—although all of the copies were bootlegs. Outside the Stock Exchange, migrant venders sold black-market copies of the novel alongside Chinese translations of "Mein Kampf."

I met Miao Yong at a trendy Western-style café near her apartment in a Shenzhen luxury high-rise. She reminded me of Wu Xiaomei: she chain-smoked Capri menthol superslims, drove her own car, and had the same worldly air. She told me that her writing had been influenced by the novels of Henry Miller. "His books were banned, too," she said.

Miao Yong responded to the ban with great resourcefulness: she turned her novel into a popular television series, purging the most sensitive material and changing the title to something more ambiguous—"There's No Winter Here." The first detail in her book jacket's author bio is her blood type; like many hip young Chinese, she believes that blood type helps determine character. When I asked her what most distinguishes Shenzhen from other parts of China, she said, "In the past, China was very collective. It was all about group

POET IN HIDING
The fog comes on little cat feet, closing Kennedy and LaGuardia.
Tuesday morning, expect it to rain in my heart like it rains on the city, so bring an umbrella.
Finally, by Wednesday, the sun also rises.
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thought. But now, in places like Shenzhen, you can decide exactly what kind of person you want to be."

Shenzhen's strain of individualism can take extreme forms. Outside a Wal-Mart store—Shenzhen was the first Chinese city to open the franchise, in 1996—private venders were selling bogus bachelor's degrees for something less than a hundred dollars. It was possible for any young woman to redefine herself here, but doing so could be risky. I interviewed one Sichuanese prostitute who was hoping to limit the job to an eight-month run; she was making seven hundred and forty dollars a month, and she figured that soon she'd have enough saved up to return home and start a small business before anybody knew what she'd been up to. She had been a virgin when she first arrived in Shenzhen. She was twenty years old and obsessed with the notion of getting her old life back. I talked with another young woman who was working as a "three-accompany girl," a night-club job in which women accompany men as they drink, sing karaoke, and dance. It's a notoriously vague profession, and more than a few three-accompany girls are willing to perform a fourth service as well. But this woman said that she hadn't accepted money for sex, and she spoke nostalgically about her old job at a shoe factory, where she had earned a hundred dollars a month and slept in a dorm room with seven other workers. "My heart was more open in those days," she said. Now she was earning thirty-five dollars a night, and on her evenings off she liked to get drunk and go dancing in night clubs, entirely by herself.

After reading Miao Yong's novel, Ma Li said that she felt no connection with the world it depicted. The heroine had no heart—all she cared about was money—and she went from one man's bed to another. "It's too chaotic," Ma Li said. "You need to control this part of your life."

I asked her where she thought these new notions of morality had come from. She shrugged. "Most people say that they came from the West, after Reform and Opening. I think that there's probably some truth to this."

"What do you think the book's philosophy is?"

"It's saying that Shenzhen is a new city without any soul," she replied. "Everybody in the book is in turmoil—they can't find calmness."

A year ago, Ma Li and Gao Ming started living together. They rented a three-room apartment in a small factory town about thirty miles beyond the Shenzhen fence, near the household-appliance plant where Gao Ming worked. The apartment building was closer to being finished than most of the neighboring structures. The concrete stairways were cracked, but everything worked, and the kitchen was well equipped. It was the first decent home that Ma Li had had since coming to Shenzhen.

Another young Sichuanese couple also lived in the apartment. Each of the couples had their own bedroom, but they shared the living room, which was furnished with a bed that doubled as a couch, a low table, a color television, and a VCR. All four of them got along well. One of the bedrooms had a laminated poster of a topless foreign couple making out. Such posters are popular in China; they're considered romantic, and they're inoffensive because the couple is not Chinese.

Ma Li didn't tell her parents about the apartment. Back home in Fuling she never would have moved in with a man before marriage. But one day, during a phone conversation, her mother asked if she and Gao Ming were living together. "I didn't say anything," Ma Li told me. "She knew from my silence that it was true." After that, neither of them said anything more about it.

Ma Li still spent weekday nights in the jewelry-factory dormitory, but on weekends she stayed at the new apartment. Gao Ming had been promoted to a supervisory position in his factory, and he was earning three hundred and sixty dollars a month. Ma Li's salary had risen to two hundred and forty dollars a month, but she was sick of the job. She didn't like the way the boss occasionally asked her to work overtime, and she didn't like being restricted to the dormitory at night.

One weekday evening, Ma Li broke curfew and spent the night with Gao Ming. The next morning, the boss called her into his office.

"He asked me what time I came back last night," she said. "That's the way he was—it was never direct. He didn't ask me whether or not I had come back—he just asked what time. I said, 'I came back this morning.' I didn't make any excuse or explanation. He didn't know what to say. I don't think he knew whether to get angry or laugh. He looked at me, and finally he just walked away."

A few weeks later, another young woman followed Ma Li's lead and started breaking curfew. Not long after that, the boss took a pretty worker off the production floor and made her his personal secretary. The worker was from Hunan Province, and she was eighteen years old. Ma Li told the Hunan girl about the boss, and one day he confronted Ma Li. He asked her what people were saying about him behind his back, and then he said, "Do you tell the other workers that I'm lecherous?"

Ma Li said, "Yes."

He tried to laugh it off, but it was clear that he no longer liked having her around. Ma Li started spending her free time searching for work. A few weeks later, she found a position as a nursery-school teacher. Like the jewelry factory, the school was outside the fence, but there were no Taiwanese bosses, no factory dormitories, and no evening shifts. The salary was roughly the same as what Ma Li had been making at the plant. She was going to teach English.

When she told her boss that she was quitting, he gave her a dressing-down.

"You've changed," he said. "You used to be obedient. Everything changed after you got a boyfriend."

"I didn't change," Ma Li said. "I just got to know you better."

On the final night of my last visit to Shenzhen, Ma Li and I took a walk. Gao Ming had returned home late from a bad day at the factory, during which a worker under his supervision had been injured. The plant was working overtime on a new product—a thermos bottle—and accidents were more apt to happen at such times.

When Gao Ming said that he wanted to be alone, Ma Li suggested that she and I go outside and listen to Wu Xiaomei's call-in program. It was a warm, clear night, and the stars were bright above the dormitory lights of the factories. We climbed a hill where we could look out over the town. It was a typical outside-the-customs factory settlement: a cluster of shops and apartment buildings wedged into a dusty cut in the hills and, fanning out along the two main roads, strips of factories and their dormitories. There were shoe and clothing factories, and a computer-accessory plant whose top story had been gutted in a recent fire. The smoke had left the plant's white tile walls streaked with black. Ma Li said that nobody had been hurt in the fire, but down the road in another factory several workers had died a few years ago in a massive blaze. That factory had been producing Christmas decorations and lawn furniture.

Ma Li was about to start her teaching job, and she was apprehensive. She was worried about her English, which had slipped during the years at the factory, and she wondered whether she would be able to discipline the children. But she liked the school campus, and she smiled whenever she talked about the new job. She kept her hair short now, her bangs pinned back with plastic barrettes. Around her neck she wore a simple necklace that Gao Ming had given her—a jade dragon, her birth sign.

We sat together on top of the hill and listened to "At Night You're Not Lonely." It was after eleven o'clock, the volume control on the radio was broken, and the voice of Wu Xiaomei crackled thinly in the night air. We strained to hear.

The first caller started crying, because she regretted the way she'd treated an old boyfriend, who had left her. Wu Xiaomei told her that the experience would be good for her and that maybe the next time she'd get it right. The second caller talked about missing his high-school girlfriend, who was far away, working in another part of the country. Wu Xiaomei said that he shouldn't believe that every feeling was love. She told the third caller that, at twenty-three, she was wrong to feel as though she had to get married immediately.

I remembered a conversation that Ma Li and I had had a couple of days earlier. We were talking about how the migrants were handling the new personal freedoms in Shenzhen, and she said that she admired the way that people here had learned to help themselves. This was a comment that she had often made in the past, but now she added that sometimes the isolation frightened her—all these people living on their own. "In original society," she said, "people lived in groups. Eventually, these groups broke down into families, and now they're breaking down again, into so many different people. Finally, it will be just one single person." A few days earlier, she had remarked that the changes in Shenzhen—the independence of young people, the shift from control by the Communist Party to control by the factory bosses—had come too abruptly. "If you could have some kind of perfect socialism, that would be the best," she said. "But it's impossible. That was just a beautiful ideal."

Now, sitting on the hillside with her, I asked if she wanted to leave Shenzhen. She shook her head quickly. I asked how she thought the new pressures of the city would change the people who lived here.

"The result is that people will have more ability," she said. "And they'll have more creativity. Afterward, there will be more different ideas. It won't be a matter of everybody having the same opinion."

I asked, "How do you think this will change China?"

She fell silent. Beyond us, the lights in the dormitories were going out. I had no idea how I would have answered the question myself, although I liked to think that, once people learned to take care of themselves, the system would change naturally. Still, I had seen Shenzhen's fragmentation—the walled city, the locked factories, the people on their own, far from home—and I wondered how all of it could ever be brought together into something coherent.

I looked at Ma Li and realized that the question wasn't important to her. Since coming to Shenzhen, she had found a job, left it, and found another job. She had fallen in love and broken curfew. She had sent a death threat to a factory owner, and she had stood up to her boss. She was twenty-four years old. She was doing fine. ♦

FICTION

LAYOVER

BY NEIL LABUTE

Now there's a nice lay, he thinks to himself, as he politely sidesteps and lets her out of line so she can carry her food over to the condiment island. A flicker of a smile on her lips as she passes. A flicker, nothing more, but it's there. He hurriedly pays for his order, not waiting for the dollar and eighty-four cents change or the receipt. No time for that now. She'd smiled at him. He juggles his two trays, weaving his way through the airport crowd as he prays for an opening near her, by the ketchup pump, or the napkin dispenser at the very least. The napkins would be a stretch, but he could manage it. He'll force his way in if he has to. He promises himself this. Well, maybe not force, but he'll definitely say, "Excuse me," pointedly. Definitely. She isn't going to get away that easily, not after a smile. No way.

"Could you pass me a spork?" she asks, trying to keep her burger together with a free hand. Looking right at him. She could have picked anyone, but she's looking right into his eyes.

"Like clockwork," he mentally notes as he picks up an individually wrapped utensil and hands it over. A finger brushing hers. The slightest of intimacies, but at the moment of impact it feels as if a chorus of angels had burst into song. That might be going a little far, but it seems very similar to that. It does. People are beginning to pile up behind him, and he grabs a packet of relish for emphasis as he offers, "I hate that name, don't you? Did they have to call it 'spork'? I mean, why not a 'foon' or something equally stupid?"

"Yeah, I know," she flashes a grin while sneaking a couple of fries.

"So . . . you stuck here, too?" he ventures, filling a few paper thimbles with mustard as cover while he engages.

"Yep," she mumbles, more to herself than anything, but it allows him to lean in a bit closer. The ole lean-in, a classic.

"Sorry? I couldn't hear you—that announcement." He points up with an elbow as he says it. "Please pick up the courtesy phone and all that. . . ." Another smile floats his way. Jesus, he thinks, What a pushover. She would do me right here, or in the lounge, at least, a hand job under my coat or something. No question.

"I never get a call on the courtesy phone," she laughs. Not a giggle, mind you, this is a full-bodied laugh. "Not once in my adult life have I ever been called to that damned white phone! Guess I'm not very special." And she holds eye contact the whole time. Bingo. She takes a nugget from his conversation and personalizes it. Adds a little melodramatic flourish at the end. Perfect response. Perfect.

Why not just press a handwritten note into my palm and be done with it? A pair of panties slipped into my carry-on? She is *begging* for it, he imagines as he gives that faux chuckle of his, the good one that most everyone at the office likes and chuckles along with. "Well, let me be the first," he suggests. "You go stand over there near the receiver and I'll have them page you with a desperate message or something." That could've been better, a stronger joke at the end or maybe a wink thrown in, but it seems to work.

"And what would the desperate message be? Huh?" Complete amusement on her part now. Absolutely complete.

"Oh, I'd think of something." He chuckles again (risky to use it twice in the same conversation, but so far, so good). A bull's-eye. She looks up expectantly while blowing a stray piece of auburn hair out of her eyes. Waits another second. People are grabbing things from around them now, realizing that a "moment" is officially taking place here.

"Come on, don't keep me in suspense. Tell me what it would be."

"Umm . . . something like, I dunno, maybe like 'Hey, tell the redhead that I'm nuts about her and to get home safely, because I already miss her.' Something like that," he says without even looking over. He doesn't need to. That was a cruise missile, that one. If she were an Iraqi, she'd be dead now. He gives it another beat, throws some straws down near the three corn dogs, then glances over. She's still staring at him.

"That's the nicest thing anyone's said to me in six years," she whispers. "Seriously, since I graduated, that's the best line I've heard." It's not a tear, but something's definitely going on in those blue, blue eyes of hers. Liquid of some sort.

"Then you're welcome, and it's not a line. You deserve to hear it every day. Twice," he chuckles one last time. A new personal best. Three chuckles, and not a sliver of suspicion out of her. Excellent. He realizes it's time to make a move, see what happens. Test the theory. One last smile on his part, what the hell, he even tosses in the wink, and then he turns to go. At the last possible second, it happens. Her voice lifts, up over the throb of the crowd.

"Listen . . . you wanna sit together or something?"

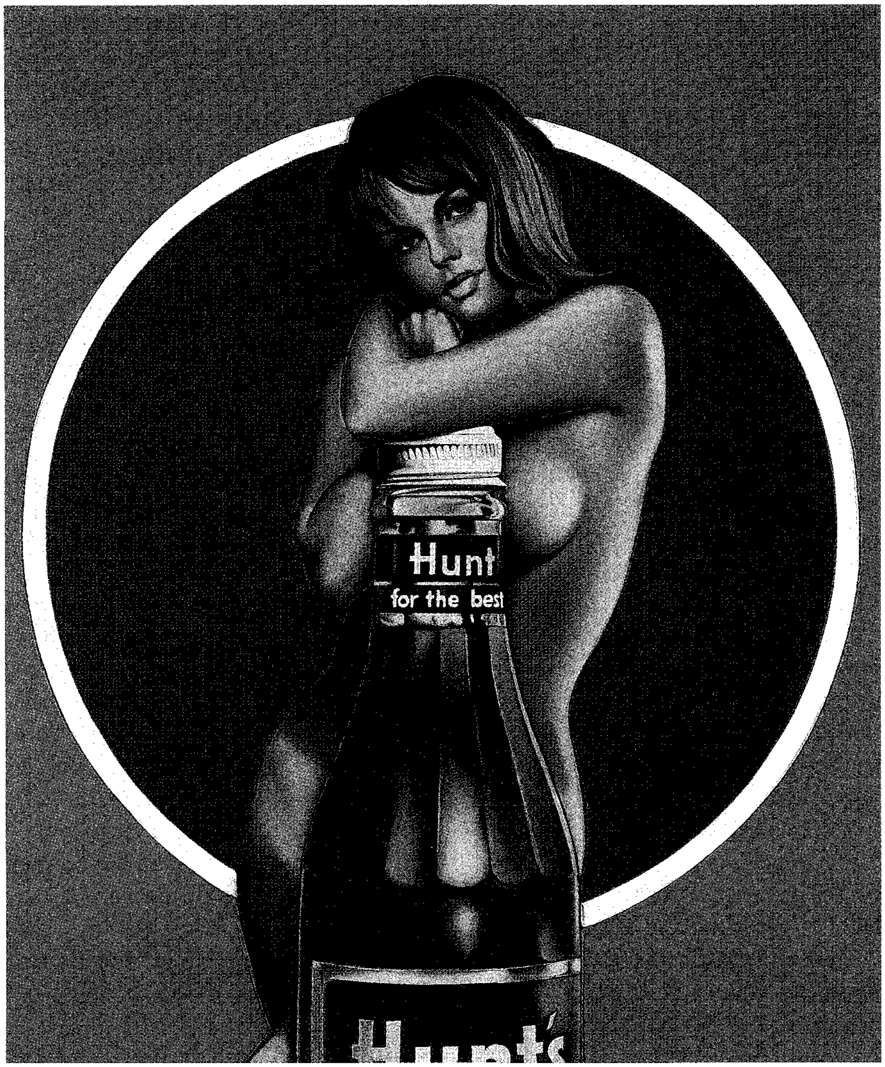
To turn quickly would be wrong—too desperate, he figures. Better to stop slowly, maybe a sigh or something, with a slight but perceptible drop of the shoulders, and then gracefully look back. A weary frown.

"Geez, you know what, I'd love to, but . . ."

"You can't, no, I understand . . ."

"It's just, I'm with some colleagues," he finally offers. "I've got their stuff here, and they're way down by D23."

“No problem,” she says bravely, but she is clearly disappointed. Clearly. He lets the moment hang between them, lets her dance on the gallows of expectation a bit longer, then bequeaths her another look. The “if only” look that has carried him from junior high to this very minute, standing here before her.



“HUNT FOR THE BEST” (1965)/©MEL RAMOS/VAGA

“Just my luck.” A thin smile and shrug from her. He fires one back, matching her shrug for shrug. He has to fire one back, it's expected. Then one step each. Maybe two. He counts out “one-two-three-four-five” to himself, even using “Mississippi” each time, before pivoting around. Checking again. And she's still looking. Checkmate. Bobby Fischer would come out of hiding to watch him work, days like these. Before he can fully savor the victory, however, the floating voice of the courtesy phone erupts overhead, raining down with cleansing static. Big smiles all around on that one, the timing impeccable, like a sitcom's laugh track. Courtesy ex machina. And exit, stage left.

He snaps open the Money section of *USA Today* for emphasis, shuffles the pages a bit, just to let the girls know he's reading, to take it a little easy with the “Hello Kitty” chatter. Doesn't even glance up at the wife. The food was a touch cold on delivery, but he felt he needed to stop for the paper after that. The “encounter.” Something to read, a helpful moat between him and the Mrs. It had taken a minute to find them, the girls having got it into their collective heads to snag a corner table instead of the perfectly good one he'd selected. Doesn't matter. Whatever keeps them quiet. He scans the stocks one last time—doesn't own any but enjoys seeing who's losing out—then folds the paper once, then over again. In the distance, a flash of red. He looks up, cautiously now; wives have radar. And there she is, the condiment gal. Sixty feet away. A whole booth to herself, busiest airport in the world, and she scores a booth. Staring straight at him. Another one of those looks, but with a twist this time. The mouth a bit turned down, the eyes a touch narrower. There could be disgust there, he's not absolutely sure. It's hard at twenty yards to read disgust with certainty. Might be the burger not agreeing with her, but probably not. She even shakes her head a touch when one of the girls erupts on his side, up from under the table and suddenly at his throat, pawing him, tugging on his ear. He silently tries to explain, plead his case, prove that he's different. That he'd give it all up for her, if only. If only. He looks over again, but she has vanished. Left her tray and faded into the lunch crowd. Maybe never even really existed. He wonders this to himself as he toys with his girl's braids. Adjusts her tiny sweater. Brushes crumbs from her flushed, tired cheeks.

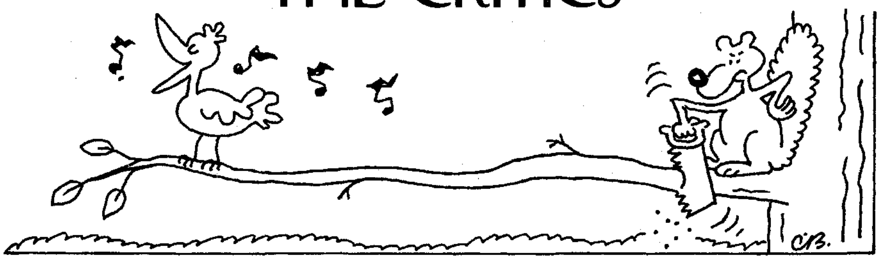
“You have beautiful children,” comes the voice, not three feet away. He hadn't planned on this one. The surprise attack. Out of the jungle at dawn. The girls titter and make faces, his spouse wipes ketchup from her chin and grins up foolishly, he buries a “Thank you” in his Sprite. He considers using the chuckle a fourth time but immediately backs away from the idea.

“You must be so proud,” she says, holding this a touch too long. Nearly an inappropriate amount of time, he feels, with no clear response from the family. Finally, she moves off, her loafers making a soulful squeak as she treads along the rubberized Spanish-tile floor. A carry-on rattling behind her. A blast of white noise from the courtesy phone covering her tracks.

“That was sweet,” says the wife, breaking the latest détente. One of her hopeful looks.

“Yeah,” he states, flatly. Directly. Scooping up the Life section and burrowing in. Thinking all the while, She wants me. She wants me. I know she wants me. ♦

THE CRITICS



BOOKS

AMERICAN DANCER

Broadway, ballet, and Jerome Robbins.

BY JOAN ACOCELLA

With Greg Lawrence's "Dance with Demons: The Life of Jerome Robbins" (Putnam; $32.95), one more biographer has discovered that his subject was not always a nice person, and has recorded his shock. Lawrence's name will be familiar to some. He's the man Gelsey Kirkland met—they were both banging on the door of the same cocaine dealer—toward the end of "Dancing on My Grave," Kirkland's 1986 tell-all, co-authored with Lawrence, about her life in the ballet. Having kicked their respective habits, married, and written "Dancing on My Grave," Kirkland and Lawrence followed it up with a sequel, "The Shape of Love" (1990), about the healing power of that emotion. Then they split up, and Lawrence found a new ill-behaved artist to write about: Jerome Robbins, who died in 1998. The literary executors of Robbins's estate had something else in mind. They made his private archives available to three writers. One was Christine Conrad, a friend of Robbins's who has since produced a nice picture book, "Jerome Robbins: That Broadway Man, That Ballet Man." Then there were two biographers, Amanda Vaill, the author of a recent book on Gerald and Sara Murphy, and Deborah Jowitt, the lead dance critic of the *Village Voice*. Lawrence was turned away, but he was not deterred. Now, less than three years after Robbins's death, Lawrence's biography has been published. Jowitt and Vaill, who are no doubt still reading Robbins's report cards, may have been pained to see the book announced. Don't worry, ladies. The Robbins story remains to be told.

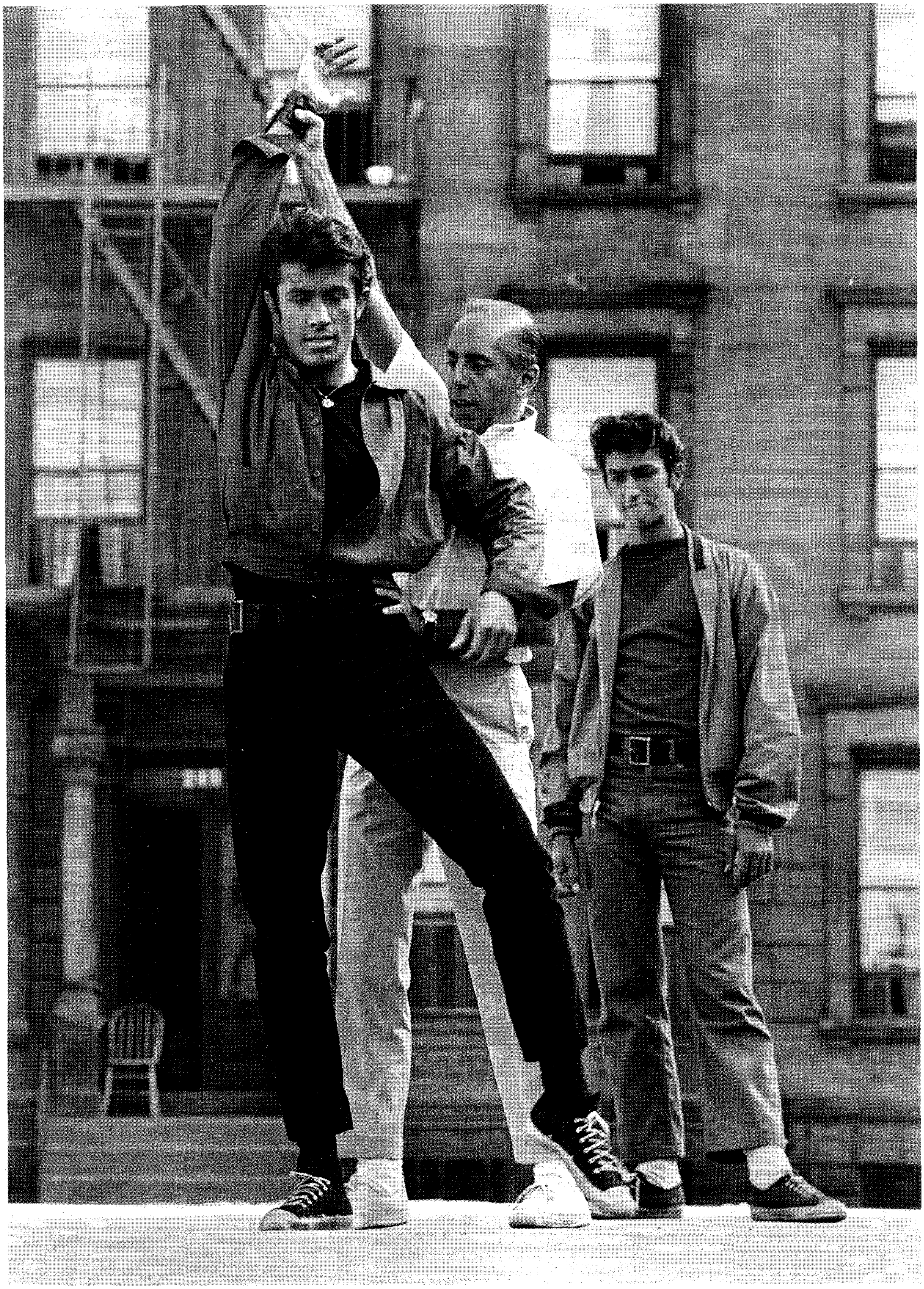
Robbins was the most acclaimed and successful American-born choreographer of the mid-century. He started out in modern dance in the thirties, then went to Broadway, and, in 1940, after a late and hurried ballet training, joined Ballet Theatre (now American Ballet Theatre). Four years later, for that company, he made his first ballet—the now famous "Fancy Free," with a jazzy score by the young Leonard Bernstein—about three sailors on shore leave. It was a hit, and before the year was out it was turned into a Broadway musical, "On the Town," which was a bigger hit.

That lucky year set Robbins's pattern for the next two decades: he commuted between Broadway and ballet. For Broadway, as choreographer or director or both, he made "Billion Dollar Baby," "High Button Shoes," "Call Me Madam," "The King and I," "Pajama Game," "Peter Pan," "Bells Are Ringing," "West Side Story," "Gypsy," and "Fiddler on the Roof." This is a partial list, and a glorious one. Robbins is widely credited as the foremost practitioner of "integrated" Broadway choreography—dancing that filled in character and advanced plot—in contrast to the just-dance vaudeville dances from which musical comedy sprang. He did that, and he did more: the "Small House of Uncle Thomas" number in "The King and I," with its layers and layers of cultural misunderstanding; "Prologue" and "Cool" from "West Side Story," with the sneakered boys exploding into dance; "Gypsy," with its hilarious sendups of vaudeville and burlesque. Broadway dancing never got more artistic than this—more subtle, more witty, more stageworthy. Robbins was born to work in musical comedy. Trained, too. He studied acting, went to the Actors Studio, and knew Yiddish theatre, vaudeville, and Broadway inside out—the gags, the timing, everything.

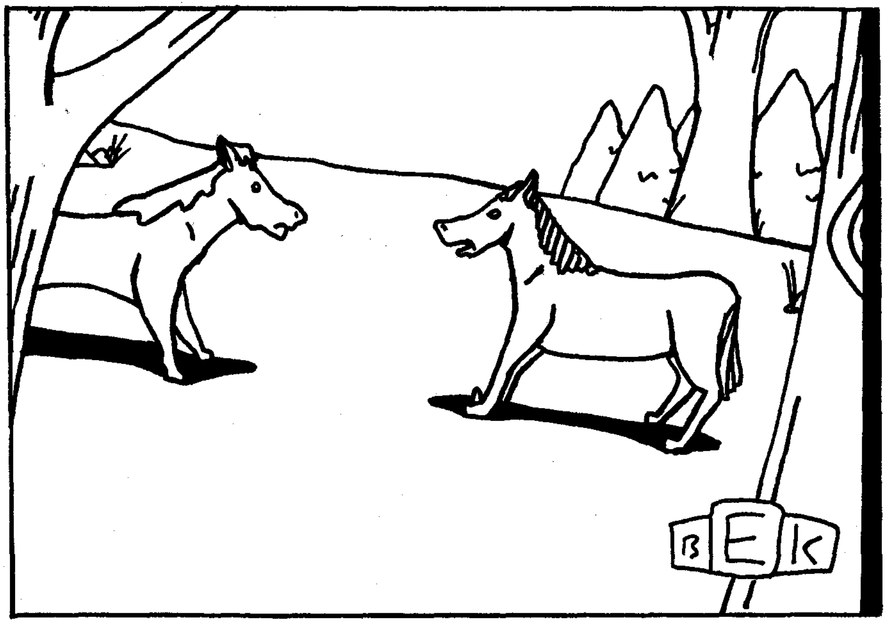
But he came to hate working in musical comedy. He was a perfectionist, and he could not bear the compromises that Broadway required: the set designers telling him that they had their own ideas, the producers telling him that the show had to open whether he was ready or not. So every year or so in the forties and fifties he would go back "home," first to Ballet Theatre, then to New York City Ballet (he moved there in 1948), and make something in the classical idiom: "Facsimile" (1946), "Age of Anxiety" (1950; based on the Auden poem), "The Cage" (1951), "Afternoon of a Faun" (1953), "The Concert" (1956). At this time there was serious question as to whether ballet could ever be an American art. People still thought it was Russian or French—in any case, old and snooty, unfit for a young democracy—and the ballets of George Balanchine, the man who finally did make ballet an American art, were on the whole so radical that the public took a while to get the point. Robbins stepped in. His ballets told stories ("The Cage"); they cracked jokes ("The Concert"); they were topical ("Age of Anxiety"); they were about young people and sex ("Facsimile"). Again and again, they seemed to say that ballet could be down-to-earth, ours.

After "Fiddler on the Roof," in 1964, Robbins, to what I imagine was the cork-popping joy of his Broadway competitors, walked out on musical comedy. By now, he could afford to. (Broadway made him rich. He left an estate of thirty million dollars, and that was after giving a lot of money away, notably to the Dance Collection—recently renamed the Jerome Robbins Dance Division—of the New York Public Library, which, since 1964, has been receiving a percentage of his profits from "Fiddler.") In the late sixties, he spent some time scratching an avant-garde itch. He founded American Theatre Laboratory, a ten-member collective that for two years did

PHOTOFEST



Robbins (center) with George Chakiris during the filming of "West Side Story," in 1961. Broadway dancing never got more artistic.



"I don't know if I'm untamed or if I just have a fear of being ridden."

• •

such things as stage a "happening" and experiment with a Noh play about the Kennedy assassination.

Finally, at the end of the sixties, Robbins went back to New York City Ballet and in a sudden gush of invention created the piece for which he will probably be best remembered: "Dances at a Gathering." For several years, no doubt in emulation of Balanchine, he had been toying with abstraction. Now, in "Dances at a Gathering," he wedded abstraction to the upbeat temper of his musical-comedy work and produced a long, expansive ballet in which ten young people just danced for an hour to Chopin piano pieces. Robbins's abstraction never went as far as Balanchine's. In Balanchine, dance is metaphor; in Robbins, it is still representation. (Though "Dances at a Gathering" has no story, there are little skits and character studies tucked into it.) But for many spectators a bit of representation was just fine. Here at last was a real American ballet, in which, without the help of sailors or jazz or any other overt Americanism, the dancers looked like us (or what we thought we were)—young, spontaneous, free, under an open sky—and at the same time confidently assimilated European art: Chopin, academic dance. This was 1969, when New York painters had finally captured the flag from Paris, and when American youth culture was changing the world. The ebullience of that period is written all over "Dances at a Gathering," and made people proud and happy to see the piece. In his later ballets—"The Goldberg Variations" (1971), "In G Major" (1975), "The Four Seasons" (1979), "Opus 19/The Dreamer" (1979), "Glass Pieces" (1983), "Antique Epigraphs" (1984), "Ives, Songs" (1988)—Robbins was never again as optimistic, and he occasionally reverted to storytelling. But the approach was largely the same: emotionalized abstraction, the meditations of a sophisticated mind in love with simplicity.

That was Robbins's career. And what, to Greg Lawrence, is the main theme of it? How mean Robbins was. His working methods, to start with, were punishing to his dancers. Because he could never make up his mind, he double- and triple-cast roles, so that the dancers never knew if they were actually going to go on. Then he made them learn multiple versions of the dance—again, he couldn't decide—so that if indeed they got onstage they barely knew what to do. Then there was the personal cruelty. He screamed at dancers, insulted their work, insulted their bodies. According to Lawrence's interviewees, Robbins was "evil" (Arthur Laurents), a "shit" (Eddie Albert), a sadist (Stephen Sondheim). "I've never worked with someone so unpleasant" (Eric Bentley). "You became like a victim of domestic violence" (Sara Corrin, an office assistant). Once, in a Broadway rehearsal, Robbins was backing up, downstage, to get a better view of the dance, and coming perilously close to the edge of the orchestra pit. Everyone saw what was happening, but no one said a word. "Off he went," the dancer James Mitchell told Lawrence. "He could have killed himself. I think he fell into the bass drums. Nobody went to his rescue, not for quite a while."

Lawrence says Robbins had "demons." He didn't like being a Jewish kid from New Jersey, the son of Harry Rabinowitz, who had an accent and ran a corset factory. Nor did he enjoy being homosexual. (Bisexual, actually.) And, apparently, his whole life long he resented the fact that his father had tried to stop him from going into dance, told him it was for sissies. To my knowledge, nine out of ten male ballet dancers in the United States had that experience, but Robbins had another, related experience. In 1953, he was called before the House Un-American Activities Committee. Like hundreds of other American artists, he had once joined the Communist Party, and had signed petitions and helped stage benefits. But, presumably because he was homosexual and feared exposure—though other homosexual artists, such as Aaron Copland and Marc Blitzstein, stood firm—he could not face down the committee. His testimony makes shameful reading. He fell over himself to name names. As one congressman remarked gratefully, his level of coöperation was "a bit unusual." Many people never forgave him, and he never forgave himself. Before HUAC, Lawrence says, Robbins was tormented and vicious. Afterward, he was doubly so, and that is the story of "Dance with Demons."

Of course Lawrence tells us what dances Robbins made and with whom. The book is six hundred pages long. But he offers almost no critical commentary on the dances. Nor are we told much of anything about their context. Jews in the thirties, the role of "art" choreographers in Broadway dance, postwar existentialism, the postwar triumph of Freudian theory (Robbins was in analysis), the question of ballet's place in America, the relationship between acting and dancing in ballet, the vogue of Method acting (and its cult of pedagogical brutality), the history of musical-comedy dancing, and of New York City Ballet (for example, how Robbins's return in 1969 coincided with the beginning of a terrible fallow period for Balanchine, who had just been abandoned by Suzanne Farrell): these matters, which have direct bearing on Robbins's career, are either ignored by Lawrence or simply waved at in passing. It's as if he were born yesterday. In his preface, he notes, as a supposedly telltale fact (evidence of "conflict"), that Robbins, who was born in 1918, kept his affairs with men "as clandestine as possible." How curious of him.

The story of Robbins's place at New York City Ballet is an especially gaping hole. How was it for this reportedly insecure man to spend two decades working alongside the person he knew to be the greatest dance artist of the century? Lawrence does something with this—or he pastes up a lot of quotations—but his account is remarkably un-nuanced. As he sees it, Balanchine loved Robbins's work and did what he could to keep him happy. When the two men were composing ballets at the same time, he often gave Robbins first pick of the dancers and took what was left—an extraordinary courtesy. When dancers came weeping to him over Robbins's nastiness, he calmed them down, cracked jokes ("If you had no hair on your head and a big gray beard, you'd be unhappy, too"), and got them back into the studio.

But I suspect that Robbins's sense of his inferiority to Balanchine was not unshared by Balanchine. One of the company's dancers told me that she once sat down with Balanchine to watch "The Cage," Robbins's tale of female violence against men. (There's a long streak of misogyny in his work.) She had seen it before, and Balanchine said to her, "This time, close your eyes, just listen to the music," the music being Stravinsky's Concerto in D. When the ballet was over, he asked her what she thought of the score. "Beautiful," she answered. "Yes," Balanchine said, "and look what he made to it." I think Balanchine did admire some of Robbins's ballets, but regardless of what he liked or disliked, he seems to have decided that Robbins would be useful to the company, to vary and lighten the programs. (In any given season during the seventies, the repertory was usually about one-fifth Robbins.) So for twenty-odd years Robbins, who had been king of Broadway, labored in Balanchine's shadow. This fact is never seriously examined in the book.

What we get instead are endless accounts of Robbins's cruelty in the studio, a matter that, like the work, Lawrence never places in context. Without excusing Robbins, one should keep in mind the conditions under which choreographers work—that is, against the clock and under the eye of maybe twenty people who stand there and stare at you when you get stuck and who, when you aren't stuck, rarely do the step the way you want it, with the result that the audience will never know the lovely thing you imagined. Balanchine was an angel in rehearsal, but he was the exception. Nijinsky made people cry; Martha Graham slapped her dancers. Today, with the unions, I doubt that there is much slapping going on, but I would say that some measure of screaming is to be expected in any collaborative art. Think of conducting. Toscanini's rages were legend.

If Lawrence had taken a look at the ballets, he would have found "demons" enough. Robbins wasn't just ashamed of being Jewish, and Jersey, and homosexual. He seems also to have grieved over being narrative and psychological, over having the common touch, being a popular artist, a Broadway man. These traits were absolutely natural to him, and he despised them, and favored abstraction, which was not natural to him. So he made something in between. In a typical Robbins ballet—"Dances at a Gathering," for example—the performers do not come out and start dancing. They come out and have feelings, and then they decide to dance—dance their feelings. Very often, other dancers sit and watch them. In other words, dance is not the medium; the medium is a vague sort of drama, with dance as a thing happening inside it. In many cases, the result looks self-conscious, sentimental—about ballet and ballet dancers—a fact unquestionably related to Robbins's late training and his worry that he did not belong in ballet. Furthermore, the dancing of feelings is a limited business. Dance, like music, is fundamentally abstract. You can

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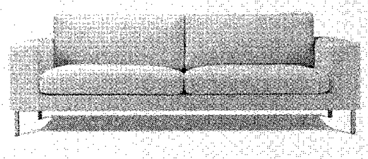

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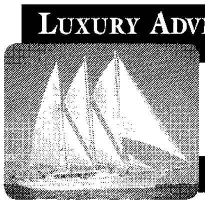

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add things to it to make it narrative. That is what Robbins did on Broadway—created dances that said, "We're going to get those Sharks," and so forth. But by this route you can't go very deep, and Robbins's ballets are a good example. Their psychology is roughly that of a high-class sitcom. This is connected, I believe, to Robbins's abiding interest in teenagers. He liked very young dancers (he was a whiz at spotting talent in the corps), and onstage they act young, have young feelings: passing infatuations, passing sorrows. The picture is never adult, never this-is-what-life-is.

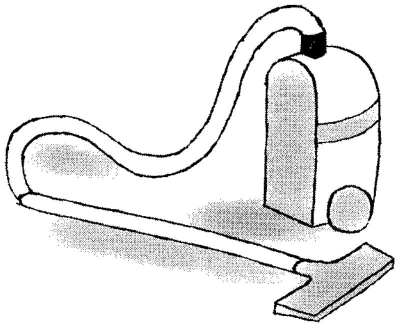
There are exceptions. Early on, Robbins made narrative ballets, such as "Fancy Free" and "The Cage," that are confident and direct in a way that his later work is not. And among his mature work there are pieces, or parts of pieces—"Dances at a Gathering," the pas de deux from "In G Major," "A Suite of Dances"—that, though they are limited, are nevertheless wonderful. "A Suite of Dances," a solo in which the dancer seems to be deciding from minute to minute what he will do next, is ostensibly a perfect instance of Robbins's studied informality, his compromised abstraction, his imprisonment in "feeling." But it does not look studied or compromised, and it seems to be less about feeling than about intelligence. (Robbins was no doubt helped here by the fact that he made the dance for Mikhail Baryshnikov, who was clearly not a teenager—he was forty-six—and who is one of the most intelligent dancers in the world.) Finally, there is no question that Robbins's ballets would have been more admired, then and now, if only they had not been created alongside Balanchine's grand, unfolding design.

But, as good as they got, they were never as good as his Broadway work, the thing he walked away from. People said this during Robbins's lifetime, and it hurt him terribly, the more so since he probably knew it was true, and wondered if he had made a mistake. (In 1989, he went back and did "Jerome Robbins' Broadway," an anthology of his musical-comedy dances.) Had he left his real home only to spend the rest of his life banging on the gates of someone else's property? If Robbins is to be discussed in terms of psychological conflict, that is the conflict, and the work is the document. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

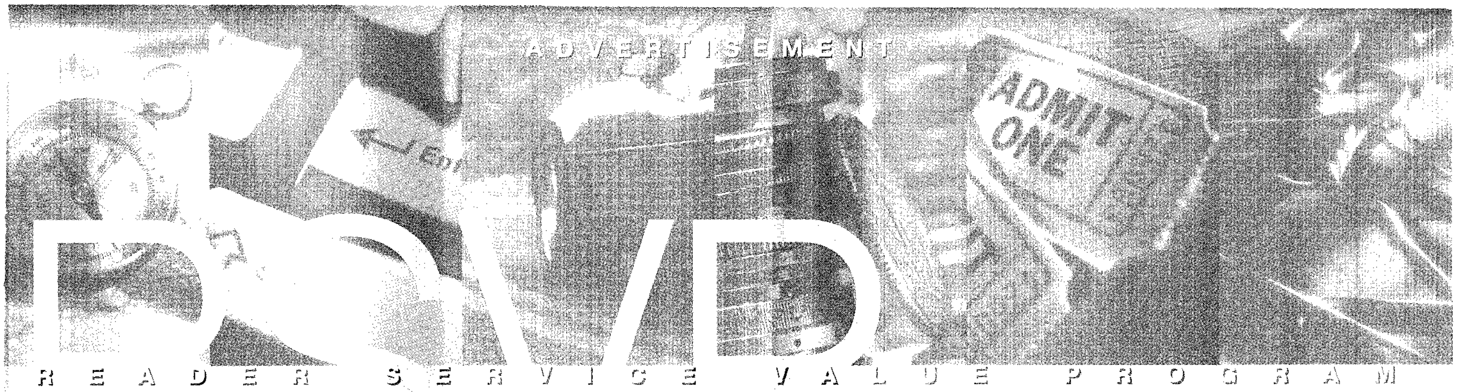
Morning, *by W. D. Wetherell (Pantheon; $24.95).* Back in the nineteen-fifties, Dave Garroway—the pleasant, bespectacled host of NBC's fledgling "Today" show—was a star, and one of the true innovators of early television. Wetherell's new historical fiction, in which Alec McGowan hosts a show called "Morning," perfectly captures the Garroway era—the mixture of news and entertainment, the excitement of a new medium, even the on-air stunts with a baby chimpanzee. But, rather than merely restage the birth of morning television, Wetherell reimagines the fifties as a dark and morally ambiguous time; McGowan is a drug addict and a compulsive womanizer, and he is eventually murdered on the air by his sidekick, Chet Standish. The story is narrated by Alec Brown, Chet's son, who is writing a biography of McGowan, and "Morning" might seem pretentious if Wetherell were not so completely in control of its elaborate structure.

Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America, *by Barbara Ehrenreich (Metropolitan; $23).* This exposé puts human flesh on the bones of such abstractions as "living wage" and "affordable housing." Ehrenreich worked, for a month at a time, at "unskilled" jobs—as a waitress and chambermaid in Florida, a housecleaner and nursing-home aide in Maine, a Wal-Mart clerk in Minnesota—to report on how people survive on wages of six or seven dollars an hour. In an easy, conversational style, she brings us the daily life of the working poor and shows that their diligence and good nature cannot earn them a place to live—a social worker advised Ehrenreich to move to a shelter—or medical or dental care or, in some cases, enough to eat. In her last chapter, Ehrenreich suggests that the working poor are "the major philanthropists of our society," sacrificing their families, their health, their privacy, and their leisure so that the rest of us can live more cheaply and conveniently.



The Other Side of Eden, *by Hugh Brody (North Point; $25).* When Brody, an anthropologist, was living among the Inuit in a place called Pond Inlet, in the Arctic, he learned that the word *ilira* signified the kind of fear caused by the presence of someone strong but irrational, like a ghost, or a white person. In a sense, this book is a study in *ilira*—a probing effort to portray the uneasy, often brutal relationship between hunter-gatherer societies, like the Inuit, and agricultural society, which gave rise to the developed world. Brody argues that we still harbor prejudices against hunter-gatherers, even after their way of life has been engulfed by ours. He presents a culture of exceptional maturity, rich in many of the things we believe we have lost—a sense of place, a sense of kinship with nature and with each other. Among the hunter-gatherers, Brody finds a formal intimacy with the surrounding world that looks very much like knowledge itself.

Comfort Me with Apples, *by Ruth Reichl (Random House; $24.95).* In this second installment of her memoirs, the editor of *Gourmet* retraces her route from married life on a commune in late-seventies Berkeley to her first job as a food critic, dining at expensive restaurants in Los Angeles with her glamorous editor (a distance of more than mere miles). She also battles her famously loopy mother; loses her father; struggles to adopt one child, and gives birth to another. Along the way, she discovers dacquoise, balsamic vinegar, Alice Waters, goat cheese, and Wolfgang Puck. Reichl writes with gusto, and her story has all the ingredients of a modern fairy tale: hard work, weird food, and endless curiosity.



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A CRITIC AT LARGE

THE SEVENTIES SHOW

What did the decade mean?

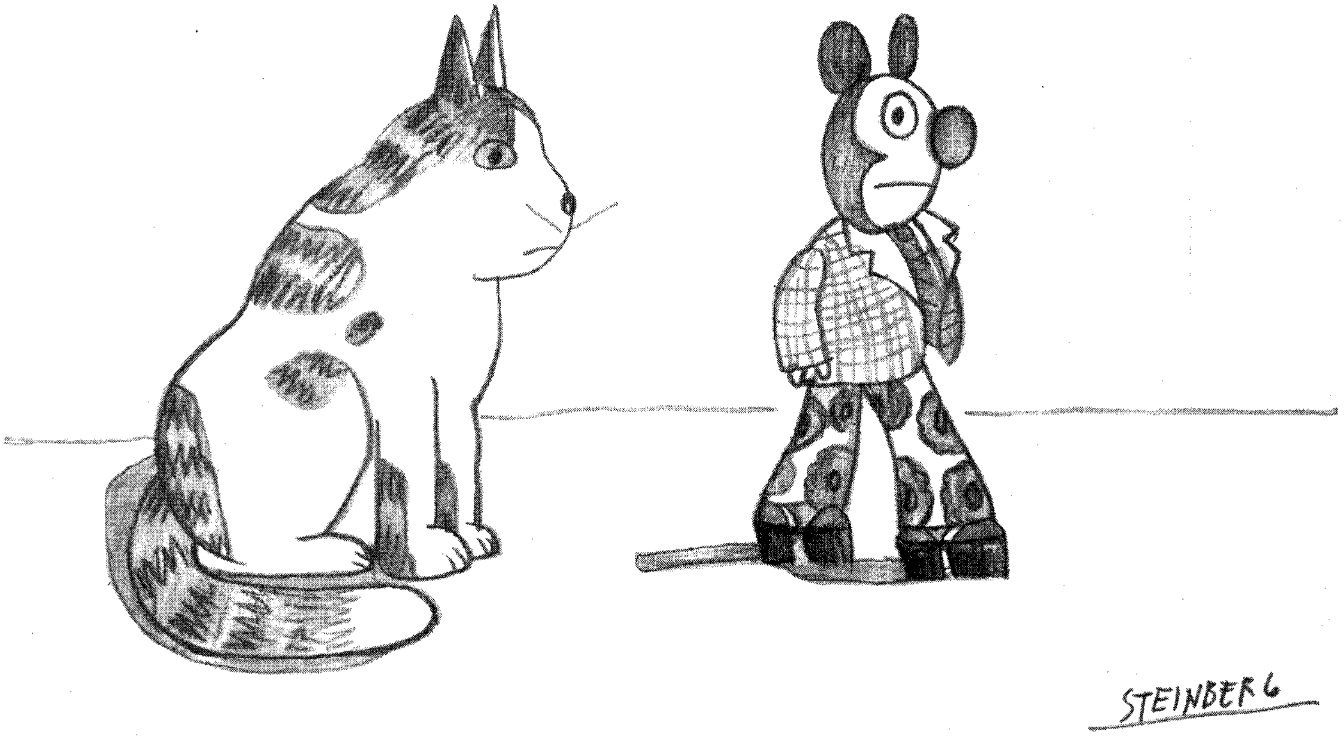
BY LOUIS MENAND

The nineteen-twenties is a Pierce-Arrow driven by a man in a raccoon coat. The nineteen-thirties is a Model T with a mattress strapped to the roof, bound for California. The nineteen-forties is a black sedan, driven by a Negro chauffeur wearing a cap. The nineteen-fifties is a station wagon with a dog sticking its nose out the window, four kids in the back, and no seat belts. The nineteen-sixties is a Mustang with the top down, headed for Miami Beach, passing a pink VW mini-bus, headed for a sit-in. And the nineteen-seventies, most analysts agree, is a Pinto in a gas line. It's an unlovely decade, the nineteen-seventies; but there are those who care about it, and some of them write books.

Decade attachment is a condition that should not be derided too quickly. Your parents rolled the dice and out you came, into a world you never made. Fitting in, you soon figured out, meant latching onto some chunk of your accidental portion of the space-time continuum and treating it as your destined turf, a piece of reality that other human beings disrespected at their peril. In ancient times, of course, the obvious thing to hook onto was your city-state—you could be an Athens person, say, or a Thebes person. But history teaches that place attachment is not the healthiest type: it is likely, sooner or later, to get you sent off to war, where you stand a good chance of being run through with a sword or, later on, shot with a bazooka. In the modern world, benign substitutes became available: your generation (lost, Beat, silent, whatever), your high school, your favorite album, the Chicago Cubs. Of these more or less symbolic attachments, decades are surely one of the least fraught. They are, among other good things, arbitrary right on the face of it. Unlike, for instance, a high school, a decade is not what philosophers call a "natural kind": life does not carve itself up spontaneously into ten-year segments. To identify yourself with a decade is therefore to declare both your loyalty to something greater than yourself and your skepticism about the whole notion of loyalty. It is to pledge allegiance with a wink.

Writing a book about a decade requires the same nice balance of earnestness and pretense. The writer is proposing to uncover a tale with a beginning, a middle, and an end in what is, after all, simply an artifact of the decimal system. The challenge, and the fun, comes from limiting the field of play to the ten years in question. The enterprise is at heart a kind of sport, and it is therefore disappointing that the historian Bruce J. Schulman, in "The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics" (Free Press; $26), begins what he calls the nineteen-seventies in January, 1968, the month of the Tet offensive, and ends it in November, 1984, the month Ronald Reagan was elected to a second term as President. He calls this period—almost seventeen years—"the long 1970s." Why not? If we had all been born with seventeen fingers, it *would* be the seventies. Under the circumstances, though, it feels a little like cheating.

Schulman is a self-avowed seventies person. He says that he hopes, with his book, to "find a voice for the children of the Seventies." Why do seventies people need a voice? The answer, naturally, is: sixties people. "The history of the contemporary United States has borne the imprint of our older siblings," Schulman complains. "The taunt we heard as teenagers—that we had missed out on the Sixties, the real turning point of U.S. history—has become the standard interpretation of the recent past." He believes that the real turning point was the nineteen-seventies. Seventies people have always known this, it seems; they have just been too intimidated to say it. " 'The Seventies,' " Schulman says of his book, "seeks to begin that process of revision, to challenge the interpretation of the Sixties veterans and recover a history for the 'wasted generation.' "



SAUL STEINBERG, 6/20/77

Schulman's book is not the first to make a case for the decade. John Updike (no friend of the nineteen-sixties) implicitly advanced the same argument, almost ten years ago, in his novel "Memories of the Ford Administration." And the journalist David Frum published a lively book last year, "How We Got Here: The 70s: The Decade That Brought You Modern Life—For Better or Worse" (Basic; $16) in which he made the same claim that Schulman makes—that it was the nineteen-seventies, not the nineteen-sixties, that changed American life ("the most total social transformation that the United States has lived through since the coming of industrialism," as Frum put it). Frum, too, thought that the main reason the nineteen-seventies were underappreciated was the propaganda of sixties people. But he was pretty sure that the world was ready to wise up and move on. "The millions of Americans born since 1970," he explained (he is a somewhat more pungent writer than Schulman), "seem to have collectively decided that the Boomers are absolutely the most boring generation of old-fogies ever to have inflicted their reminiscences on the young."

The first thing it strikes a sixties person to say about this line of complaint is that it is so beautifully and unreconstructedly *seventies*. Seventies people want a decade because sixties people have one. No news there. And what does their decade turn out to be? A reader of either Schulman's book or Frum's will come to the same conclusion, one that was reached by most sixties people long ago: that the seventies were basically ten years of sixties aftereffects. A great wave rolled up on the beach, depositing, high on the shoreline, Jackie Kennedy, the "I Have a Dream" speech, Motown, the miniskirt, Joe Namath, "Blonde on Blonde," "Portnoy's Complaint," and the Head Start program. Then it drew back, leaving behind Evel Knievel, Werner Erhard (né Jack Rosenberg), Bobby Riggs, "Frampton Comes Alive!," "Jonathan Livingston Seagull," the "malaise" speech, the zipless fuck, and a handful of Whip Inflation Now buttons. It is hard to see how the second batch of detritus belongs to a "social transformation" greater and more profound than the first. But that seems to be the argument.

To their credit, Frum and Schulman make no particular aesthetic claims for their decade; Schulman calls it "gaudy, depressing." They just think that somewhere in there you can hear the gears shifting. Schulman's view is that the nineteen-seventies was a period of increasing individualism (Frum agrees), loss of trust in big government and other institutions (Frum says the same), privatization, and the "Southernization" of American life, by which he means both the spread of white, working-class Southern tastes across the country and the growing political power of the Sun Belt states. All this could be summed up by saying that during the nineteen-seventies what used to be called Eastern-establishment liberalism finally bit the dust. This seems a rather negative way to define a decade, but it's a fair assertion. The question is: why?

Frum's idea is that the nineteen-seventies can be understood as "the rebellion of an unmilitary people against institutions and laws formed by a century of war and the preparation for war." Americans got tired of restraining themselves in the name of the national good, and after Vietnam and other disruptions they could no longer see any reason for continuing to do so. He thinks that this explains why self-centeredness was the leading personality trait of the period—why Tom Wolfe was right to call the

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The sorrows of the rose were mounting up.
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Bent and twisted in a field of weeds,
The rose was helpless. It felt the breeze
Of Paradise just once, then died.
The children cried, "Oh rose, come back.
We love you, rose." Someone told them
Soon they'd have another rose.
"Come, little darlings, take your candles
To the pier, lean over the edge, and look
At yourselves looking up. Now do you
See it, its petals closed, rising to the surface,
turning into you?" "Oh no," they said.
"We are what we are—nothing else."

How perfect. How ancient. How past repair.

—*Mark Strand*

nineteen-seventies the Me Decade.

Schulman doesn't have quite as tidy a theory, but his narrative is not very different. The failure of American policy in Vietnam, followed by the Watergate scandal, destroyed Americans' trust in public institutions, he says. The oil crisis and the continual rise of inflation fed a general sense that the nation was in decline, and so did the rise in crime, the rise in teen-age pregnancy and single motherhood, the spread of drugs, welfare abuse, court-ordered busing, and the deinstitutionalization of the mentally ill. Americans reacted first by retreating from the common culture. They turned to est, meditation, and various eco-fanaticisms, and they cultivated cultural separatisms—blacks and other ethnic groups, women, gays. The election of a Southern born-again Christian, Jimmy Carter, in 1976, was a sign that the country was ready for a new public ethos, but the Carter Presidency ended in the twin disasters of high inflation—in 1980, consumer prices rose sixteen per cent—and the Iran hostage crisis. What had happened (as we now can see) was that Carter had not sufficiently repudiated the big-government liberalism of the nineteen-sixties. Americans realized that Ronald Reagan was the answer. With Reagan's victory, they finally abandoned their dependence on the state and rediscovered their faith in entrepreneurial capitalism. The bad nineteen-sixties were exorcised at last. Take a bow, nineteen-seventies!

The trouble with this narrative as a defense of the nineteen-seventies is that it is really a defense of the nineteen-eighties. Jimmy Carter and the nineteen-seventies were what Reagan ran against, twice, and what his successor, George Bush, also ran against, also twice. To say that the nineteen-seventies invented the template of contemporary American life and then to say that Reaganism is that template is incoherent, and one of the things making it incoherent is the insistence on treating the nineteen-seventies as a historical unit. Some things that happened in the United States between 1970 and 1979 anticipated life in the Reagan era and some were dead on arrival at the threshold of that great dawn. Even in the nineteen-eighties, some things were Reaganesque and some things were distinctly not. In trying to make sense of American politics and attitudes, the decade business is a complete distraction.

When we are talking about the nineteen-seventies as some sort of reasonably discrete historical entity, what we are really talking about is something that exists mainly in the heads of the cohort that reached adulthood at some point in that decade, the people who between 1970 and 1979 were at the time of life when the mind is soft enough to take an impression yet firm enough to retain it. These people carry the cultural imprint of the period with them for the rest of their lives. Of course they think their decade is "transformational": it's when they were transformed.

A useful thing to remember about the members of this cohort—it is a point almost never acknowledged in histories of decades or of generations—is that they did not create the nineteen-seventies. The nineteen-seventies was something that happened to them. There is a difference, in other words, between the people who flourished during the nineteen-seventies—Burt Reynolds, say, or Gloria Steinem—and the people who grew up watching Burt Reynolds movies or reading *Ms*. The imprinters belong to a different cohort from the imprinted.

The conventional account of the nineteen-sixties has become a classic instance of this type of confusion. People say, "The nineteen-sixties was a decade shaped by the baby-boom generation." In fact, it is almost impossible to name a single figure from the nineteen-sixties, apart from Janis Ian and a few college radicals late in the decade, who was born between 1946 and 1962, the years of the boom. This is true even of the leaders of the "youth culture," the people who went around saying, "Don't trust anyone over thirty." Jerry Rubin was born in 1938, Abbie Hoffman in 1936. Hoffman was thirty-one when he and Rubin founded the Youth International Party—the Yippies. (During the trial of the Chicago Seven, when Hoffman was asked to give his date of birth he answered, "1960.") The baby boomers, contrary to their reputation—and contrary to the revenge fantasies of their younger siblings—have always been a fairly passive generation. They sang and they marched in the nineteen-sixties, but they did not, for the most part, write the songs or deliver the speeches. The older boomers are sixties people not because they created the culture of that time but because they carry its mark.

The question, therefore, should not be: What were the nineteen-seventies? It should be: What is a seventies person? One characterization might disinterestedly be ventured. A seventies person is a person who still believes that there is an important relationship between the stuff left lying on the beach as the wave pulls back—the platform shoes and the Bee Gees albums and the Coneheads skits—and what is really going on. Indeed, a seventies person thinks that hairdos and pop songs and television commercials are truer, deeper, more complete articulations of the national condition than, say, editorials and poems and works of political philosophy. Seventies people think that changes in style and taste are where meaning is really lodged. They are the last people in America to believe that keeping up with popular culture is an intellectual duty.

When, for example, Schulman writes a passage that begins, "But the Ramones were on to something bigger than they realized," he is upholding the seventies faith: that your favorite pop song holds the key to the national psyche. Frum is loyal to the same creed, and the two books have a huge number of pop referents in common. Frum is cooler toward a lot of this material—he's a writer for *The Weekly Standard*, and a more conservative fellow than Schulman—but he is possibly even more deeply committed to the theory of the significance of flotsam. "It meant something when the Romans stopped wearing togas," he says. "It meant something when French nobles stopped carrying swords. It meant something when Americans stopped spitting into cuspidors. Now it means something when you can buy a decaffeinated Sumatran coffee with steamed semi-skimmed milk and an almond *biscotti* on the ground floor of what used to be a discount woolens warehouse in the country that invented Nescafé."

But it means nothing. This is, in fact, one of the lessons of the period: the longer you stare at the products of consumer culture, the dizzier you become. Fads and tastes and cultural vogues are uninterpretable, and the reason is that it is impossible to know which is the trend and which is the backlash. Does the fact that we now have a choice among thirteen kinds of designer coffee mean that there is more real choice in American life, or less? Do people spend three dollars for a cup of coffee because they feel they can afford anything they want, or because they feel they can't, and overpaying for coffee helps them compensate for the fact? And what is the Sumatran thing all about? A genuine refinement of the American palate or a successful piece of marketing fakery? "We are incompetent to solve the times," Emerson once said. In a consumer society, the new thing must be different from the old

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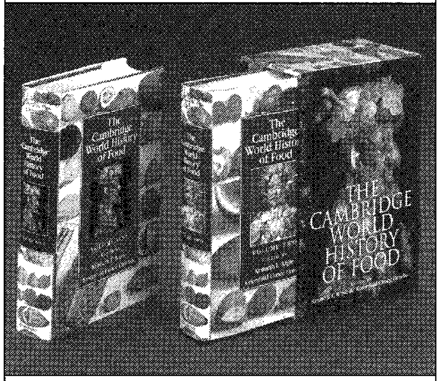
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Apart from the desire to confer distinction on the nineteen-seventies as a decade, the narrative that Frum and Schulman set out—the story of American decline and renewal—is a familiar one. It is the standard narrative used to explain the rise of Reaganism. But what happened between the nineteen-sixties and the nineteen-nineties is not an American story. It is a global story, and this makes a difference in how we understand it.

Americans are, to put it gently, a self-absorbed people. They are fascinated by their own changing spectacle, and they tend to assume that the rest of the world, unless an American happens to be paying attention to it, is essentially static—that while Nixon connives and Newark burns, Swiss maids eternally carry pails of fresh milk down the hill, Italian mammas eternally stir great pots of marinara sauce, British gentlemen eternally doze in the armchairs of their club. Americans thus tend to Americanize their historical understanding. For example, most American historians explain the student protests of 1968 as a consequence of Lyndon Johnson's Vietnam policies, the assassinations of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr., the delayed impact of Dr. Spock's permissive child-care theories, and so forth. But, as Paul Berman has pointed out in his marvellous and original history of the period, "A Tale of Two Utopias," in 1968 there were student protests of almost the same character and intensity in France, Germany, Mexico, Czechoslovakia, and Japan. Whatever drove thousands of twenty-year-olds around the world into the streets at almost the same moment, it was not something that happened only in America.

The American narrative of decline in the nineteen-seventies—the growing distrust of institutions, the rise in crime and incivility, the epidemics of divorce, teenage pregnancy, and single motherhood—is, almost uncannily, a Swedish narrative, an Italian narrative, a Canadian narrative, a Spanish narrative, and even a New Zealand narrative. Apart from Japan and Korea, every industrialized country in the world went through a similar period of decomposition and demoralization between the mid-nineteen-sixties and the nineteen-nineties. This point has been made convincingly, and with ample statistical documentation, by Francis Fukuyama in "The Great Disruption," published in 1999. Fukuyama's book is an immense corrective to America-centric historical thinking. Once you realize that whatever explains the rise in crime in the United States after 1963 also has to explain the rise in crime in New Zealand and Sweden in precisely the same period, you find yourself on a completely different plane of analysis. The Warren Court's criminal-procedure decisions just won't do it.

Fukuyama's theory (yes, Fukuyama has a theory) is that this global episode was caused by a shift from an industrial to an information economy, the most sig-

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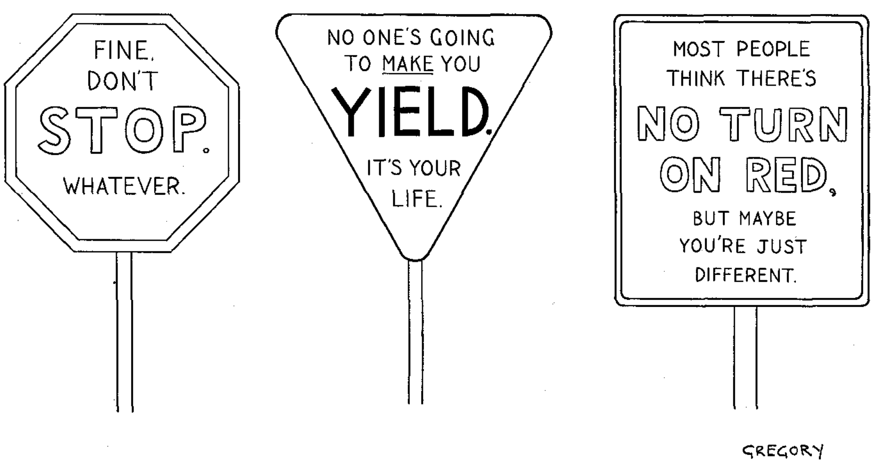
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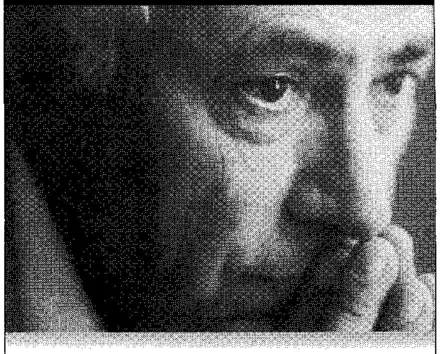
nificant effect of which, he thinks, was the movement of women out of the family and into the workforce. In an information economy, brawn is devalued as an employment asset relative to brains, and this opens careers to women, because there is a need to draw from as large a pool of brainworkers as possible, but it also weakens the nuclear family. Perhaps that is not the whole story; if it is at least part of the story, though, it completely alters our understanding not only of events but of our own role in events.

It means, for example, that the literature of the women's movement is, in effect, epiphenomenal, a by-product of changes in underlying conditions that were going to happen whether Gloria Steinem published a magazine or not. In 1973, at the Houston Astrodome, Bobby Riggs played a tennis match against Billie Jean King. It was billed as "The Battle of the Sexes," and was framed as a test of the claims of the women's movement. King, as the world knows, cleaned Riggs's clock. She won the match easily, 6–4, 6–3, 6–3. Her victory, Schulman says, "signaled the arrival of the women's movement as a broad cultural force." But, if Fukuyama is right, Riggs *had* to lose "The Battle of the Sexes." He could not know it, but he was just riding a wave. He was flotsam.

So are we all. How it is that our tastes, preferences, and reasoned choices in life—the decision to go to law school, leave the spouse, order the tofu burger, switch to the Sumatran decaf, cheat on the exam, carry the pregnancy to term—are correlated, almost perfectly, with trends so vast that they can be expressed only statistically is one of the mysteries of existence. It's a subject that induces vertigo, like thinking about what was there before the big bang. That decision to leave the spouse or to order the tofu burger felt so difficult at the time. It could have gone either way, you were sure. But you were wrong. You *had* to order the tofu burger. Not only that, you had to like it. It's not advisable to ponder this for too long; you might drive off the road or something. Still, it does help explain why people seek the solace of their own decade. A decade can be a kind of home in a universe supremely indifferent to the fact of your existence, a home you will always carry with you, like a snail, creeping down the beach. ◆



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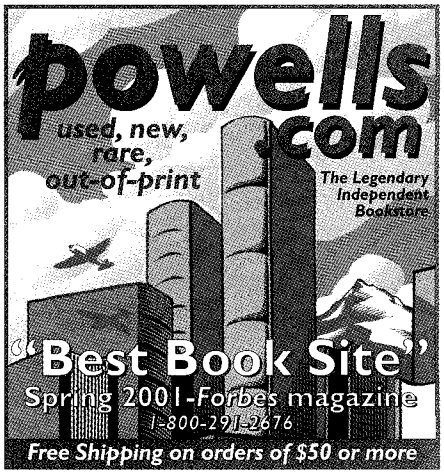

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MUSICAL EVENTS

LIGETI SPLIT

The composer as comedian.

BY ALEX ROSS

György Ligeti, the greatest of Transylvanian composers, once wrote a "Poème Symphonique" for one hundred metronomes. The year was 1962, and the piece had the look of a prank—a rotten egg tossed at the classical tradition. In performance, however, it cast a curious spell, one that the composer may not have fully anticipated. Several years ago, I was lucky to witness a scaled-down, twenty-four-metronome version of "Poème," at the New England Conservatory. The hilarity of the scene—a concert stage filled with windup machines—gave way to a sense of unexpected complexity, as networks of rhythm emerged from clouds of ticktock noise. Then, as the metronomes expired, one by one, there was a strange tremor of emotion; the last survivors, waving their little arms in the air, looked lonely, forlorn, almost human. I thought of Robert Musil's story "Flypaper," in which a trapped insect is said to perform "endless gesticulations of despair."

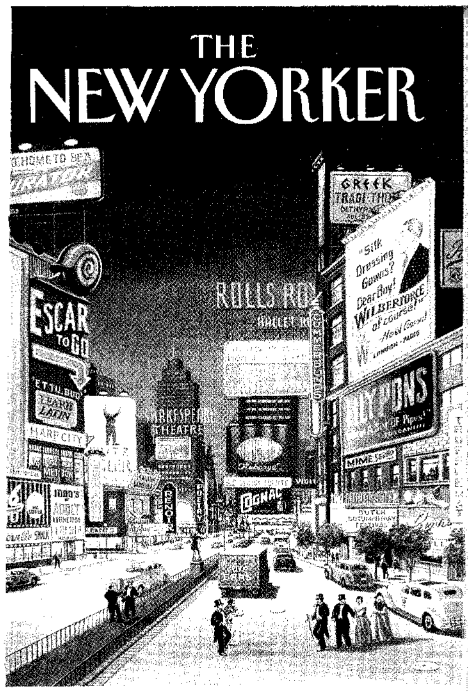
The "Poème Symphonique" is Ligeti in a nutshell. He is, first of all, one of the few major composers, modern or ancient, who are notable for a sense of humor. The repertoire offers many jokes of the aggressive, galumphing kind—the shenanigans in "Die Meistersinger," for example—but less of the sly sort of wit in which the comedian treats himself as flippantly as he treats the rest of the world. Haydn had this fundamental lightness of spirit, and Rossini had it, too. In the twentieth century, an egregiously humorless one, Carl Nielsen stood out for his smiling tone. The Beatles also had the saving grace of silliness; they took themselves seriously, but not as seriously as their audience did.

If Ligeti were nothing more than a joker, he would never have reached his perch at the summit of contemporary music. When the Swedish pianist Fredrik Ullén played the composer's Études at Cooper Union earlier this month, the hall practically shook with the force of a personality. Blessed with awesome powers of invention and assimilation, Ligeti may be the one living composer for whom "genius" is not too strong a word. His music shows the influence of—to make a random list—the Masses of Johannes Ockeghem, the player-piano music of Conlon Nancarrow, the saxophone solos of Eric Dolphy, the drumming of the Central African Republic, the etchings of M. C. Escher, and the imprecations of Captain Haddock in the "Tintin" books ("Blistering barnacles!"). Yet there is a world of raw feeling behind all this accumulated brilliance, and in recent years the comedian has almost given himself away.

In the blistering Études, Ligeti returns to his ancestral origins in the world of Liszt.

RICCARDO VECCHIO

Ligeti was born in 1923, in Transylvania, to a family of Hungarian Jews. His father died in Bergen-Belsen, his younger brother in Mauthausen. He himself survived a long term in a forced-labor gang. Ligeti was not the only child of Hitler's apocalypse who would go on to take a leading position in the postwar musical avant-garde: Karlheinz Stockhausen worked in a military hospital behind the German front; Hans Werner Henze was drafted into the German Army at the age of seventeen; and the late Iannis Xenakis had his face torn apart by a British shell in 1944. The horror of the war seemed to create in this generation a distaste for sentiment, a need to discard the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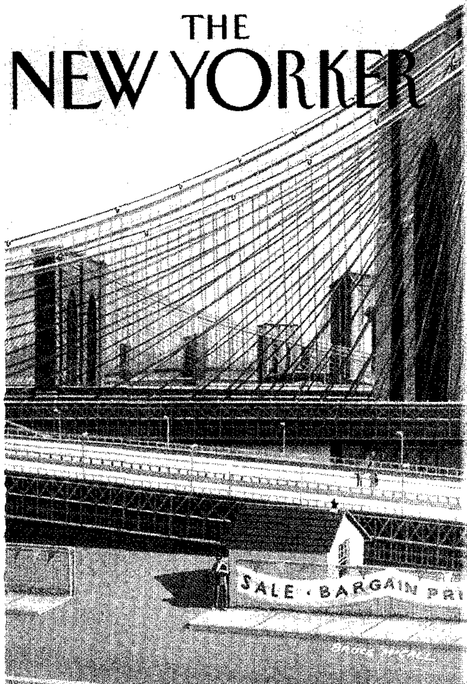
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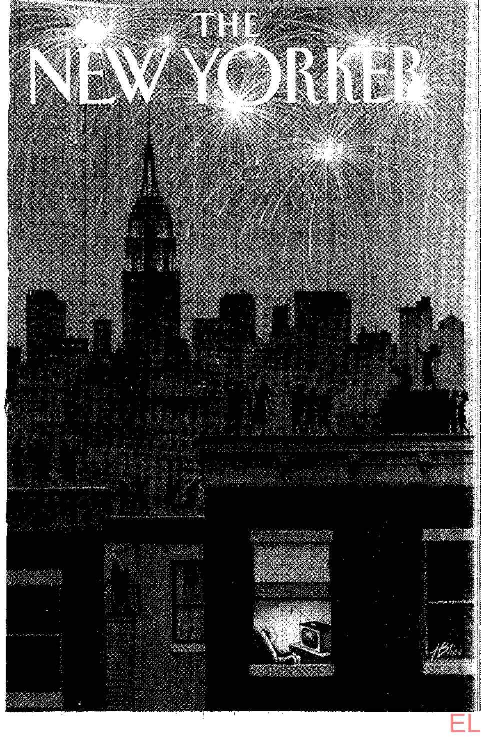
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past, and an urge to create utopias of sound.

Ligeti consorted with the avant-gardists, but he remained wary of them. Having fled Hungary in 1956, he knew that the enemies of intolerance could become intolerant themselves. He rarely participated in the ideological controversies of Stockhausen, Boulez, Nono, and company; indeed, his "prankster" pieces of the sixties seemed like a protest against the prevailing aesthetic of abstraction. In the revolutionary "Atmosphères," of 1961, which would later accompany the "head-trip" sequences in Stanley Kubrick's "2001," Ligeti wrote music of eerie, microscopically evolving beauty, tempering the strangeness of his language with an operatic feeling for phrasing and transition. He avoided the spastic, stop-and-start gestures that were typical of the era; his rhythms were fluid, his chords luminous, his forms organic. The pieces often ended only minutes after they began, leaving a sense of mystery and expectation.

The work in which Ligeti really found his path was "Lontano," for orchestra, from 1967. It is a musical shadow play, in which voluptuous acts seem to be taking place behind a heavy scrim. The composer helps himself to harmonies of almost Mahlerian richness, but he devises his own idiosyncratic syntax for moving from one chord to another. Is this a Bachian theme in G minor? Hard to tell, because it has disappeared into a haze of permutations. Is that a D-major triad in the cellos, right before the end? Yes, but you can only see it; you can't quite hear it. Is this C-sharp now, or F-sharp? No, the D is coming back. The music hovers out of reach, teasingly imprecise, yet viscerally beautiful. Each sonority hangs in the air like the smile of the Cheshire cat. (If you missed the Concertgebouw Orchestra's ravishing "Lontano" last year, you can hear the Munich Philharmonic play it next February, under James Levine.)

By the nineteen-seventies, the avant-garde had run its course, and the clearest signal of its obsolescence was the Beatles' "Revolution 9," which replicated the way-out textures of Stockhausen without the benefit of conservatory training. Composers, trumped by pop, began to search for a way back toward classical tonality. Some, like John Adams, plunged into the thick of Romanticism, but Ligeti was more cautious; his method of deconstructing and reassembling tonality on his own terms—"non-atonality," he called it—meant that Boulezian scolds could never accuse him of nostalgia. One landmark of his new style was "Melodien," which Reinbert de Leeuw has recorded on a gorgeous Teldec disk; it is modern music charmed and made happy. The Horn Trio, from 1982, is a virtual-reality chamber-music masterpiece in which Ligeti's ghost seems to haunt the world of Brahms.

With the Études, which began appearing in the eighties, the composer has come full circle. He is back where he started, as a student of musicians who had known the world of Franz Liszt. The pieces are, at times, insanely difficult, but they are written for the piano, and not around it, like many other so-called classics of the twentieth-century literature. They are stocked with classic gestures of piano technique: sweeping Lisztian octaves, shimmering Debussyan arpeggios, Chopinesque passagework, misty chords out of Grieg's "Lyric Pieces," the stained-glass harmonies of Olivier Messiaen. They also reach outside classical tradition to the insolent complexity of Nancarrow, the nervous runs and sweet cadences of Thelonious Monk, and the rough-edged folk tunes of the composer's childhood. In these small forms, Ligeti feels free to indulge all his secret loves. The elegance of the resulting high-low mix has already had a profound effect on younger composers, who are hungry for rigor and sentiment in equal measure.

Ullén, a practicing neurobiologist, has recorded Ligeti's complete piano music for BIS, but it was another thing to see him knock off all seventeen Études in high virtuoso style. After the onslaught of "Coloana Infinita," which was originally written for player piano, it looked as if Ullén were going to faint, but he moved on unflappably to the newest pieces in the set: "White on White" (1995), "Pour Irina" (1996-97), and "À Bout de Souffle" (1997). The title "White on White" signals that the pianist is using only the white keys, and that the music will touch on simple C major. It is, indeed, clear as day, and yet, as always with Ligeti, something is off. There are flecks of dark in the stream of pure, bright, folkish sound. Where the Romantics used to smile through tears, Ligeti cries through smiles. ♦

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THE ORIGINAL

Grandma Moses looks better than ever.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

Grandma Moses again: why not? Well, there's that wretched "Grandma" business, which recalls a time when Americans went around unrestrainedly laying familial sobriquets on one another. A serious scholarly effort to plump up the reputation of the folkish artist who died in 1961, at the age of a hundred and one, thus hits a snag in its very title: "Grandma Moses in the 21st Century." (The show, which has been elegantly curated by Jane Kallir, is at the National Museum of Women in the Arts, in Washington, D.C., until June 10th.) "Grandma" entrenches the artist's midcentury status as a popular icon and a runaway marketing phenomenon. (Hallmark moved sixteen million Grandma Moses Christmas cards in 1947 alone.) So here's an idea: Anna Mary Robertson Moses, painter. Isn't that better? Where Grandma was, let Anna Mary be. If there are other critical problems with the Moses revival, I don't detect any. The paintings are always engaging, sometimes marvellous, and, after a long rest in genteel approbation, as good as new.

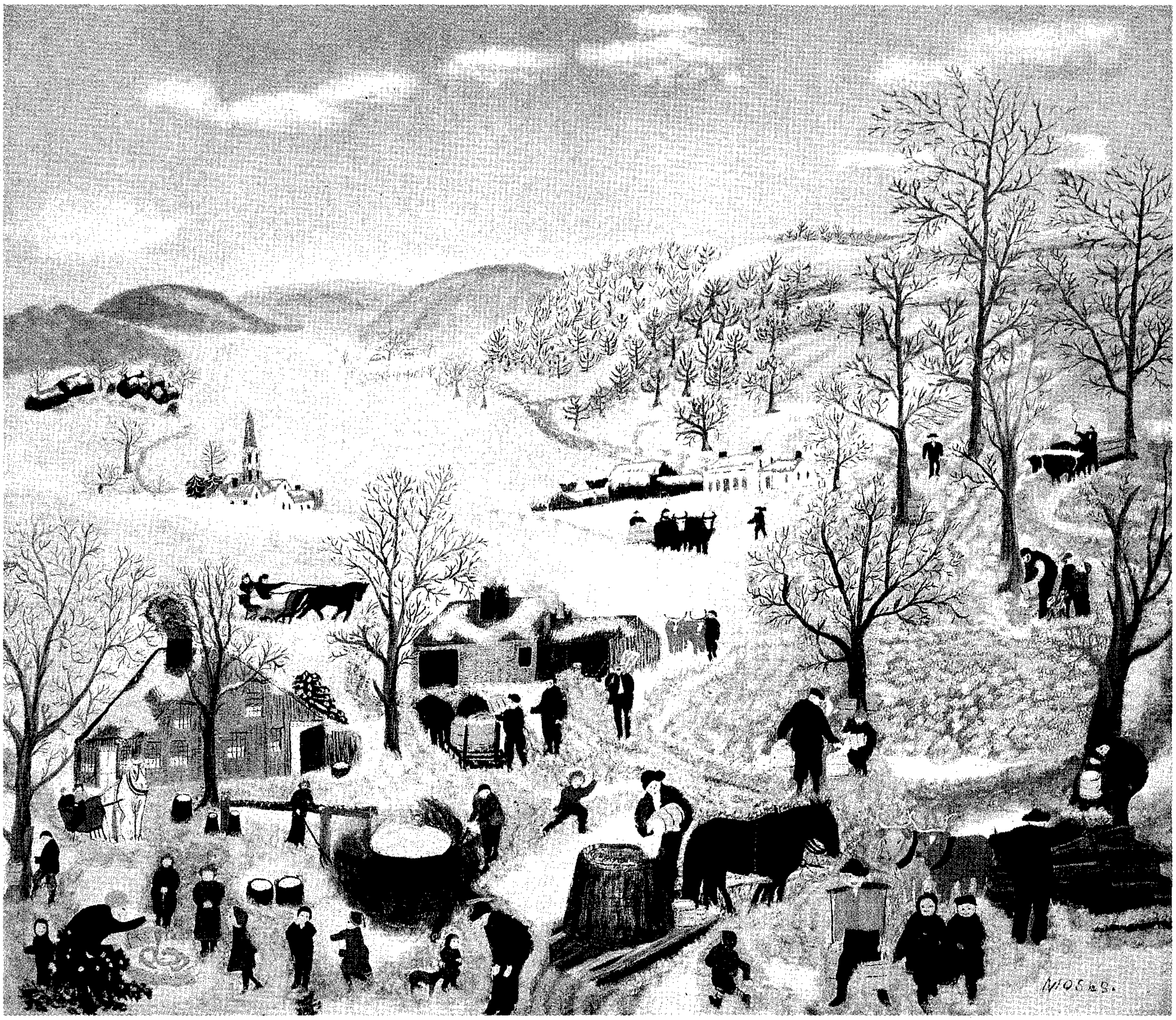
"I had always wanted to paint," Moses said in 1943, "but I just didn't have time until I was seventy-six." Born into an upstate New York farm family whose lineage went back to the Mayflower, she started working as a servant at the age of twelve. Fifteen years later, she married a hired man. They moved to Virginia and were tenant farmers in the Shenandoah Valley. Five of their ten children died in infancy. They returned to New York in 1905 and bought a dairy farm in Eagle Bridge, near the Vermont border. Moses's husband died in 1927. After a spell of making pictures in embroidered yarn, she began painting in earnest in the mid-thirties. A New York collector, Louis Caldor, discovered her work in a Hoosick Falls drugstore in 1938. Two years later, Otto Kallir, the owner of the Galerie St. Etienne, took her on. The rest is part history, part hysteria. Moses's first fame—exemplified in a private show at the Museum of Modern Art in 1939—reflected avant-garde enthusiasm for the "primitive." When that élite fashion waned, Moses was embraced as a homespun genius by organs of popular taste. A 1949 *New Yorker* cartoon shows a garret housewife berating her morosely idle painter husband: "Grandma Moses doesn't get into a funk. Grandma Moses doesn't have to wait for the creative yeast. Grandma Moses isn't hamstrung by the tensions of her time. Grandma Moses knocks them out one after another. Grandma Moses . . ."

Moses came along in an era of national yearning for culture heroes befitting Henry Luce's "American Century." She was the anti-Jackson Pollock, the nativist choice for a laureate role that cosmopolitans assigned to Jack the Dripper. Both artists seemed to distill Americanness—Pollock with volcanic ambition, Moses with obdurate modesty. The political and the spiritual drama of that moment is now obscure for a couple of reasons. First, the cosmopolitan, progressivist group wrote the period's history. Second, Moses fell victim to the sterile categories of "naïve" and "outsider" and "self-taught"—labels that the educated classes use to protect a culture of credentials. The truth is that every genuine artist—and, preëminently, every great one, like Pollock—retains childlike and alienated qualities and remains self-taught where it counts. Moses belongs smack inside the canon of twentieth-century art. She isn't great—her achievement is too hermetic—but she's real and in need of no special pleading. Her integrity and her originality become unmistakable as her legend recedes. So does her shrewdness in finessing the blitz of double-edged, kiss-and-kill publicity that America visits upon its paragons and that, as we know, helped to destroy Pollock.

Moses's idiosyncracies were subject to the sort of jocular condescension that attends the cracked verbal clarities of Yogi Berra, and she proved capable of Yogic forbearance. In a 1955 television interview with Edward R. Murrow, the ninety-four-year-old artist is at once pert and stoical, with something about her of a coltish girl who has learned patience by hard practice. At another point in the fifties, she obliged a photographer by posing with brushes and a painting outdoors, as if she were at work *en plein air*, which was not her method at all.

Moses painted from memory, sometimes aided by photographs and by cutout images that she traced onto her pressed wood surfaces. Her best pictures unfold startlingly expansive landscapes of fields, woods, and hills that slide smoothly into Brueghelesque foregrounds of buildings and teeming figures. She said that she came by her scenic vision in a flash—when the hubcap on a car at her farm caught her eye with a fish-eye reflection of the surrounding, familiar countryside. I am reminded of an epiphany that was reported by Fernand Léger, who saw modernity distilled in sunlight gleaming on a cannon during the First World War. Moses's all-at-once compositions are indeed modern. They eschew the hand-me-down picturesque conventions that vitiate most "self-taught" painting. When you step up to a major Moses like the snow scene "Sugaring Off" (1943)—near enough to behold cannily varied, unfussy textures and summary colors that affect the eye by temperature as well as by hue and tone—the picture's scale turns vast and intimate simultaneously. Beauty happens.

Moses's subject matter certainly invites projection, because it is canned. She had only two human themes: rural and domestic work and rural and domestic play, sometimes set in the remote past but essentially ahistorical. Haying and sledding are haying and sledding, never mind trivial evolutions of gear. Her figures—smiley-faced blobs, for the most part—are never individuated. There are people aplenty, but no persons. The art-



In such landscapes as "Sugaring Off" (1943), Moses, who painted from memory, achieved a scale at once vast and intimate.

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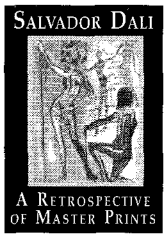
ist's own personality hardly registers. The pictorial point of view tends to be mysteriously elevated, suggesting a low-flying god with a wide-angle, Cyclopean eye. Moses's satisfaction in her work plainly was formal, not thematic. She seems never to have exactly repeated a composition, even when she yielded to popular clamor for yet another go at "The Old Oaken Bucket" or some such chestnut motif. Never rote, her choices emit a constant, mild bliss of invention. Behind the aggressive charm of her subjects, she is far more an abstract painter than an illustrator—somewhat like Roy Lichtenstein.

None of Moses's fans craved emotional revelations from "Grandma," and that suited Anna Mary fine. Sentimentality is always cold, at root. Moses's frosty reticence, which entitled her public to whatever syrupy interpretations it liked, surely masked elements of sorrow and anger from a difficult life. It's interesting that she entered upon her maturity as an artist by burning bridges. Two views of covered bridges ablaze, along with the amazingly lurid "A Fire in the Woods" (1940 or earlier), are among the first works in the show. Apart from a martial-history painting, "The Battle of Bennington"—which she did at the request of the Daughters of the American Revolution—and an occasional gun-wielding hunter, no hints of violence appear after 1943. I surmise that success stabilized Moses emotionally around her relentless work ethic—"It seems foolish to sleep when there is so much to do all over," she once wrote—even as she endured infirmity and outlived all but two of her surviving children.

There's a choice moment of Yogi Berra syndrome in the Murrow interview. When Moses was painting "The Battle of Bennington"—about a victory over the British on New York soil in 1777—she included, beyond a far hill, the obelisk monument to the battle that would be erected later in Vermont. Murrow teases her about the anachronism, which had prompted the D.A.R. to solicit a "corrected" version of the picture. Moses starts to explain that the detail was meant to soothe Vermonters' proprietary feelings about the battle. Getting nowhere with the suavely smirking Murrow, she placidly lets the matter drop: if literalists want to regard her as addlepated, that's not her affair. In fact, she might have considered it an advantage. Having people deem you an adorable village fool is almost as good as being left in peace. ♦



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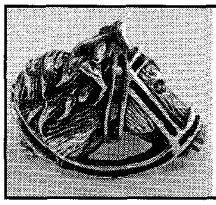

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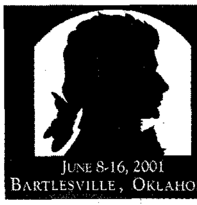

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POP MUSIC

SWEET MISERY

The mellowing of Nick Cave.

BY NICK HORNBY

It's the sheer ubiquity of pop music that presents such an obstacle to older fans. When I was fifteen, it was satisfyingly hard to hear the music I loved. It wasn't played in supermarkets or on airplanes; it wasn't blasted out of passing cars; there wasn't a TV station devoted to it. In the U.K., in those pre-promo days, the one rock-oriented BBC program was so short of visuals that it had to be content with playing album tracks over vintage cartoons. To listen to Led Zeppelin in 1972 I had to be in my bedroom, and I liked it that way. If you are fifteen now, what must it be like for the music you love to be dogging your every step? I don't have the figures on hand, but it seems unlikely that "Yesterday" received as much exposure during the first five years of its life as the latest Destiny's Child single has in the last couple of weeks.

How, then, given pop music's transmutation into a sort of aural smog, is it possible for an artist to create something that sounds mysteriously compelling? Nick Cave's 1997 album, the austere but haunting "The Boatman's Call," began with Cave singing, in a lugubrious and irredeemably manly bass, "I don't believe in an interventionist God." (In the world of contemporary pop music, there's very little room for theological hesitancy. He's either in or He's out.) It was a first line that conveyed a whole package of messages. The polysyllabic adjective suggested a certain degree of literacy. (Cave has a published novel, "And the Ass Saw the Angel," under his belt.) The line also told you, in its introversion and funereal pace, that "The Boatman's Call" was not going to be kids' stuff. If you were feeling gloomy and defeated, then this CD was what you wanted to hear, unless, of course, you take the view that such feelings are best expunged by a bracing dose of Britney. Best of all, these first few bars suggested that here was an artist who was going to inhabit his own world relatively undisturbed. The most mournful and misanthropic song on "The Boatman's Call" was entitled "People Ain't No Good": you knew you were never going to hear it while trying on a pair of jeans or tucking into an Egg McMuffin.

Cave's recordings have always been intense, but they haven't always been quiet. His first successful group, the Birthday Party, made a punk-inspired and self-consciously apocalyptic noise whose main purpose, apparently, was to terrify the audience into submission. When the Birthday Party split, in 1983, Cave (an Australian who, with his pallor and his shock of dark hair, might have helped Tim Burton imagine Edward Scissorhands) formed his current group, the Bad Seeds, whose recordings have become progressively less ragged and scary, without succumbing to the blandness of most adult rock. It's as if the singer had succeeded in converting whatever energy was previously manifested as rage into something no less fierce but much more seductive.

Cave's new CD, "No More Shall We Part," is, in patches, so transcendentally beautiful that one can be forgiven a small spasm of impatience: if he had this in him, why did he waste all those years shouting at people? (One possible answer may involve drugs; Cave, at an earlier stage of his career, had a much publicized habit, and one or two attendant legal problems.) The opening of the first song on the album, the Victorian-morose "As I Sat Sadly by Her Side," sounds, with its delicate percussion and ominous strings, like a spooked response to Van Morrison's good-Karma classic "Astral Weeks," and in white pop you don't get anything much prettier than that.

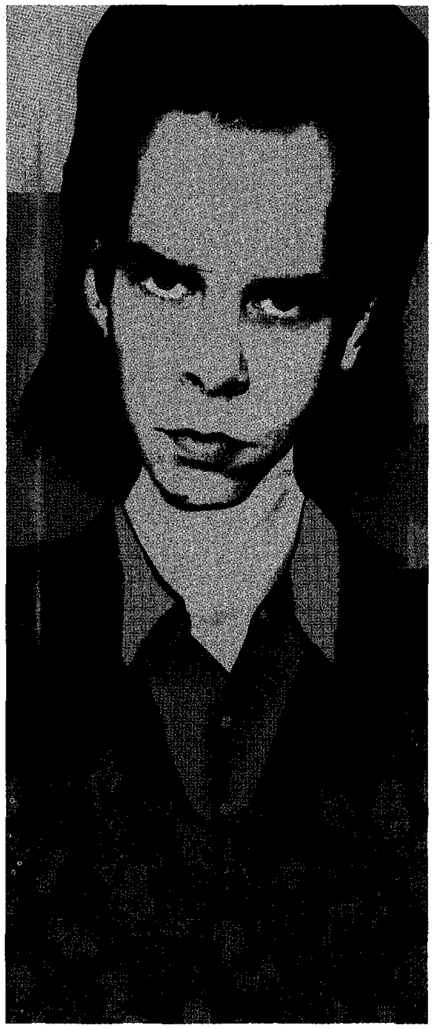
Unfortunately, the rest of the song doesn't quite live up to the promise of the introduction. More than six minutes long, "As I Sat Sadly by Her Side" may not be the most protracted pop song ever written, but there is little sense that we are being taken on a musical journey. Cave just plows dutifully through one verse after another—the song has no chorus to speak of—as if he were eating an overfilled plate of decent but plain food at a grandparent's house. As a result, one's attention is drawn to the writing, which seems better suited to the nineteenth-century European stage than to a twenty-first-century CD. Try singing along to "You are not a home for the hearts of your brothers / And God don't care for your benevolence / Anymore than he cares for the lack of it in others." Cave's stab at a sort of otherworldly timelessness can often result in such ponderous tongue twisters. A song entitled "Fifteen Feet of Pure White Snow" mentions Matthew, Mark, Mary, and the Lord, so when the narrator asks someone to "put down that telephone" it sounds comically anachronistic; there are very few contemporary rockers who can't pull off a reference to a phone call, but somehow Cave has managed to put himself in that select group.

The title song on the album, however, "And No More Shall We Part," contains a climax so arresting that the heavy-handedness elsewhere can be rationalized as a risky process of range-finding. The song begins as a resigned hymn to romantic commitment. (Cave, the most ingenuous of confessional songwriters, was recently married, though it's fair to say that you will have heard happier music sung by a newlywed.) Then, suddenly, both the melody line and the focus of the lyric change, and the title now refers to God rather than to a beloved. "Lord, stay by me / Don't go down / I never was free / What are you talking about?"

It's a thrilling moment, made more so because, until this point, Cave has held back the album's secret weapon: the heavenly voices of his backup singers, Kate and Anna McGarrigle. Even the most imaginative dinner-party host wouldn't have seated the ethereal McGarrigles on either side of the hell-raising former Birthday Party singer; their music has a purity that Cave, at one point in his career, would have found laughably prissy. In fact, the combination turns out to make perfect sense. The McGarrigles' second album, "Dancer with Bruised Knees," is packed with the sort of morbidity that Cave would understand; in any case, the McGarrigles have always sounded as though they'd be more comfortable in an earlier, less comfortable age. At the end of "Hallelujah," the third offering on Cave's new album, the sisters sing, a cappella, "The tears are welling in my eyes again / I need twenty big buckets to catch them in," and you can't imagine that they've ever been asked to do session work as blissfully miserable as this.

JOHN RITTER

In "The Secret Life of the Love Song," a thoughtful lecture that serves as a preface for his new book, "Complete Lyrics," Cave describes his love songs as "gloomy, violent, dark-eyed children" and goes on to compare them to "lifelines thrown into the galaxies by a drowning man." The latest addition to this rather tubercular body of work is "Love Letter," a song as rich and as memorable as anything he's ever produced. The conceit—the narrator says something he regrets and sends a letter to his lover in the hope of repairing the damage—is pop-trite, and despite the Hardyesque pathetic fallacies (wicked winds, skies hanging heavy with rain) the lyrics scarcely bear the weight of Cave's existential despair. The music is another matter—slow, anguished, aching, with the McGarrigles again entering at the song's conclusion to add a heartbreaking shade of blue. In "The Secret Life of the Love Song," Cave refers to "what the Portuguese call '*saudade*,' which translates as an inexplicable longing, an unnamed and enigmatic yearning of the soul," but he can't tell us, or other musicians, how you come by *saudade* in the first place.



Without losing any of his old fierceness, Cave has become genuinely seductive.

Nothing else on "No More Shall We Part" is as moving as "Love Letter," partly because most of the other songs work theatrically rather than musically: it's an experience to wander around the blasted heaths of "Hallelujah," but it's not going to fit very snugly into the small corners of the average day you might reserve for rock music. "God Is in the House," a small-town satire that Randy Newman might have caught himself whistling, is the closest Cave comes to being merely amusing, but it still contains more savagery than your typical divertissement. "Homos roaming the streets in packs / Queer bashers with tyre-jacks / Lesbian counter-attacks," sings Cave's appalled bourgeois, God-fearing narrator—in other words, another song you wouldn't want to set on Repeat Play.

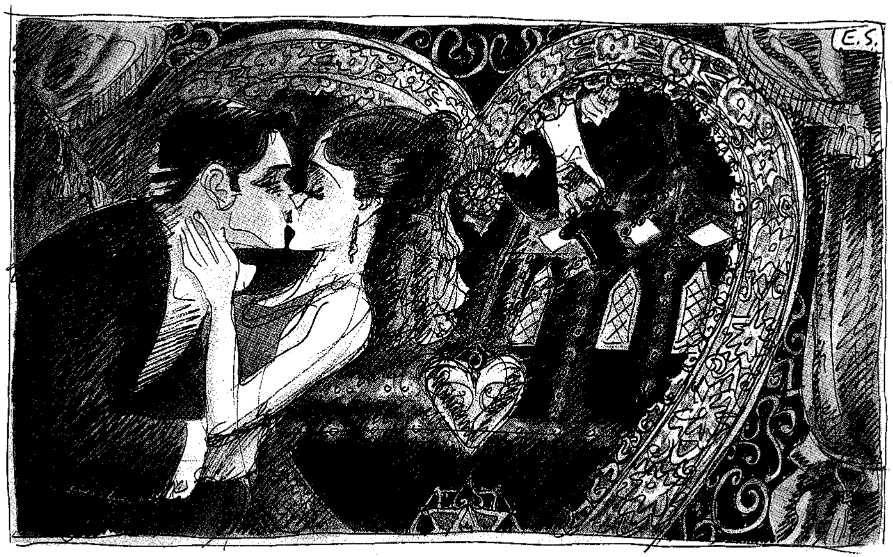
"No More Shall We Part," like so much of Nick Cave's work, is sometimes as unwilling to please and as demanding of your attention as a small child. And yet this may explain why it is such a relief to enter its airless, occasionally overwrought world. In a time when even the angriest, most intimidating hip-hop or heavy metal seems designed to sell us something—a movie or a wrestling match or a life style—Cave's music doesn't seem remotely interested in selling anything. That is to say, it's music made by an artist, in the old-fashioned, twentieth-century sense of the word. It's not going to make Cave a lot of money, but it's his, and ours, if we want it to be, and for that we should be thankful. ♦

THE CURRENT CINEMA

CUTUPS

“Moulin Rouge” and “The Mummy Returns.”

BY DAVID DENBY



Ewan McGregor and Nicole Kidman in a movie of dizzying cultural footnotes.

EDWARD SOREL

“Moulin Rouge,” the Baz Luhrmann musical starring Nicole Kidman and Ewan McGregor, is the absolute paradigm of our current restlessness. In this frantically ambitious pop pastiche—postmodernism in a nutshell—no single song is performed from beginning to end, no dance number is staged without the dancers’ movements being kaleidoscoped into a dozen angles. Set in a stylized and digitalized Paris, the movie offers the Moulin Rouge night club as a seething Belle Époque Studio 54 in which hundreds of engorged swells in black top hats are entertained by “bohemians.” One of the bohemians, a fresh-from-the-provinces writer named Christian (McGregor), falls in love with Satine (Nicole Kidman), a consumptive cancan dancer and courtesan. Satine melts, and returns his love. But will she remain faithful, or will she do what the Moulin Rouge impresario Zidler (Jim Broadbent) wants her to do—sell herself to the priss-faced wealthy duke (Richard Roxburgh) who offers to bankroll the company? The story is no more than an outline, but it manages to combine the Orpheus myth and “Camille,” and vaguely to evoke about a dozen other things, including “The Children of Paradise,” “Gilda,” and “Cabaret.” Luhrmann and his script collaborator, Craig Pearce, must have thought that the mere piling up of sources would produce a thick-textured referential masterpiece, as if one could forge a jewelled dagger out of a bunch of plastic reproductions.

There is no end of amazing moments. At the beginning, a tiny conductor stands before a red curtain, spasmodically leading the overture like a puppet on a string. His movements give way to a flying-over-the-rooftops entrance into the Paris of 1899. Shot in black-and-white, with a slightly shaky camera, this entrance is reminiscent of the naïvely beautiful magical effects in very early movies. Throughout “Moulin Rouge,” Luhrmann does startling things with scale. Men in the club toss their hats into the air, and, in a sudden shift to a digitalized view, from way up high, we see the hats rising like fleas from the city below. When the two lovers stand on the roof of the club and sing, Zidler’s face appears in the moon, frowning at them. Luhrmann, the director of “Strictly Ballroom” and “William Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet,” is alternately grandiose and frisky. With his production designer, Catherine Martin, he does the club itself as a thrilling mass of crimsons and blacks; Satine’s backstage lair looks like a gift box of brandied chocolates. The sets are lusciously decadent or seedy, but Luhrmann plays so many tricks with the camera and with editing—fast and slow motion, staggered printing—that one hardly gets to enjoy more than a glimpse. And as a director of actors and dancers Luhrmann never settles into a rhythm that brings out the best in people. Much of the movie is whipped into an opéra-bouffe clownishness. Faces surge into view, gaping and leering at the camera, as if they were descending in a roller-coaster car. The dancers’ movements get chopped into pieces and intercut with something happening on the other side of town.

Luhrmann has described the movie as “a story told by song.” By “song” he means the act of singing, not any song in particular. Kidman and McGregor, whose voices aren’t bad, begin a love duet with a few bars of the Beatles’ “All You Need Is Love,” pass through bits of Phil Collins, U2, David Bowie, and Brian Eno, and end with “I Will Always Love You” capped by Elton John’s “Your Song.” It’s like a medley from a TV variety show of forty years ago, but with a difference—those medleys were done as companionable spoofs (take it away, Dino), whereas this one is intended to capture the essence of romantic longing. The farrago of pop may make the period setting easier for kids to take, but it’s an experiment dictated by fear of committing yourself to any one sound, to any one composer’s imagination of love. In the great musicals, the lovers break into song when spoken words are not enough; by expressing themselves individually, they become everyone in love. Kidman and McGregor, by expressing promiscuously what everyone has felt, become no one in love. It’s too bad, because they have the looks for fantasy lovers. Wide-eyed, eager, but with a touch of shyness, McGregor is charming, and the pale, elongated Kidman loosens up more than she ever has; at times, she drops her kitty-with-a-whip naughtiness and becomes triumphantly silly as a femme fatale. But Luhrmann has too many ideas, too many ambitions to make either a good love story or a good musical. He has become an irrepressible technologist of romance—an editing-machine genius who crushes music and dance at will.

The huge hit "The Mummy Returns" is harder to follow than "Memento," whose story runs backward, or "The Circle," which is in Farsi. For a while, a narrator attempts to explain things. He tells us in an imperious voice that "Anubis forced the Scorpion King to serve him for all time," plus several other interesting and useful facts, but then, overwhelmed by a multiplicity of curses and tombs, and by hordes of creatures prancing across the desert, he gives it up as a bad job and is never heard from again. The writer-director Stephen Sommers, who clearly ranks among the most wily and resourceful schlockmeisters in film history, follows the same strategy that he used two years ago in "The Mummy": remorselessly jam together elements from terrible movies, lay them on thick, and never let up. "The Mummy Returns" could be described generically as a sub-Indiana Jones nonsense-adventure picture. Here, too, there are liberal borrowings: the legions of buglike mummies who so easily fall to pieces are obviously a grateful homage to the squashed-insect epic "Starship Troopers"; the rotting and fanged gray corpses come out of every horror movie of the past two decades. The special effects, by Industrial Light & Magic, are right up to date, but anyone who has watched television in the middle of the night will recognize the old trembling-pillars school of filmmaking. The heroes, bearing torches, enter a vast and untidy tomb, avoiding creepy things at their feet; they open a heavy door behind which some buried horror waits to rise from the dead; the ancient languages are fervently spoken ("Piana ta Anea Rau!" someone remarks); the tomb begins to shake and fall down; everyone flees.

As the married adventurer-archeologist team, Rachel Weisz and Brendan Fraser go nicely together—her crisp, angular beauty plays off his genial, roast-beefy American determination. But these two keep getting crowded off the screen by devil-eyed monsters and whirling clouds of tomb dust. Sommers doubles and triples everything: there are three lowlife villains, with Cockney accents, who seem to have stepped out of "The Pirates of Penzance"; there are two comics, one white, one black; and there is an Irrepressible Boy, who keeps wandering off and getting into scrapes. The story is a rush of garbled action, with breaks now and then in which the characters fall in a heap and make self-conscious jokes. Intentional camp, "The Mummy Returns" disarms criticism. How can you attack something that is *trying* not to make sense?

In the old days, the studios employed teams of screenwriters precisely to insure that a story hung together. But planned incoherence is something new—particularly in a movie that cost a hundred million dollars and will gross more than two hundred million. Sommers is obviously on to something: he has taken accurate measure of an alienated audience that can enjoy itself by watching mucky creatures and roiling digital clouds and a messiness so pervasive that no one could possibly feel a thing about what's happening onscreen. In themselves, the "Mummy" movies couldn't be more harmless, but as a phenomenon they give one pause. There is something entombed, and even cursed, about moviegoers who prefer not to have an emotional connection to what they're watching. And what about all the kids lining up to see the wrestling star Dwayne Johnson? Johnson, who is known as the Rock, finally emerges, in all his glory, wearing giant crab claws. It's a little hard for him to get around with these awkward limbs and, roaring and flailing, he doesn't make much of an impression. Doesn't anyone feel cheated that the Rock has been turned into such an elaborate piece of special effects that he's not remotely interesting as a movie star, as a human being, or even as a famous body? ♦

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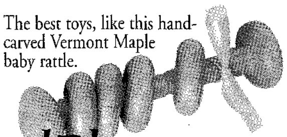

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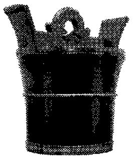

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EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE
GIGALOGIC August 1995-May 1996
Junior Assistant Staff Engineer
Member of sixty-person team testing beta versions of revision 8.2.1b of company's proprietary operating software. Attended department meetings. Performed light filing chores.

HOORAY! November 1996-December 1998
Various positions
Held a variety of positions during the company's exciting period of expansion from a fourteen-person start-up into a twenty-thousand-person multinational corporation. Job titles included Associate Web Designer, Official Java Wizard, and Dotcomcierge. Later, as Archduke of Expansion, oversaw the attempted conversion of a twelfth-century castle in the Scottish moors into a high-tech "cyber-dome," which was to have served as the company's European headquarters and also as a staff rave palace. (Plans were postponed indefinitely after a spontaneous peat fire.)

mylatte.com December 1998-March 1999
e-Commerce Solutionizer
Part of a five-person strike team that envisoned and created this vibrant and groundbreaking Web-based espresso-beverage-delivery company. Employed a team of a thousand cyclistas, who were tasked with bringing delicious lattes and cappuccinos to the homes and offices of our end users throughout the Bay Area via a patented wearable en-route-brewing system. Company was forced to rescale after several hundred e-livery persons suffered scalding injuries due to a design flaw in our frothers. A boldness deficit on the part of some of our financial backers made it difficult for us to respond in a timely fashion to this crisis/opportunity.

WILLIAMS, FISCHER & DAVIS March 1999-September 1999
Apostle of Fun
As principal in proactive consulting firm, offered On- and Off-Site Enjoyment Services to more than two dozen Internet-focussed Fortune 500 corporations. Personal specialties were unconstrained thinking, not being bound by convention, and never listening to the naysayers. My e-visions included staff parasnorkeling retreats in Bali, private Aerosmith concerts for programmers, and solid-gold foosball tables as team rewards. Personally innovated the trademarked Take a Break™ day, in which staff was encouraged to "de-stress" by setting office furniture aflame and throwing it out the windows.

internetstrategies.com September 1999-July 2000
C.E.O.
Raised $235 million in venture capital, and then oversaw planning meetings about what, precisely, to do with it. Company Strategic Visions tried on for size included Virtual United Nations; some sort of portal; iBridge (a service whereby large municipalities could Web-order fully constructed suspension bridges, for immediate delivery); and a pre-pre-incubator. Launched own proprietary satellite, aboard a gleaming Chinese rocket. After satellite flamed out in stratosphere and proposed merger with chubby-amateurs.com ran into regulatory trouble, market correction right-sized the company's valuation to $42,350. One day, ran out of money, fired everybody, sold remaining office equipment at a jumble sale.

RETIRED July 2000-January 2001
Retiree
Slept twelve hours a day, conquered every level of Prisoner of Zelda, drove sports cars, dated models (mostly catalogue; one runway), invested in Internet stocks.

bizbuzz.com January 2001-April 2001
Editorial Assistant
Repurposed content for financial-news site. Attended department meetings. Performed light filing chores. Company retooled, and my new assignment was to live in public with my lover in a loft equipped with dozens of Webcams. Laid off because of low hit count, which the company blamed on what it termed my "unusual bathroom habits." Litigation pending, as soon as I find a lawyer.

CURRENT GOAL
I seek a challenging position in a dynamic, cutting-edge firm where my responsibilities would include the preparation and/or retailing of speed-cooked food materials. I can be reached at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Williams. Ask for Lance. Don't leave a message; I never get them.

"It was on my birthday I learned my little girl was free of leukemia. That was the best gift I ever had."

— **Nicholas Parisi**

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